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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* FIFTH.

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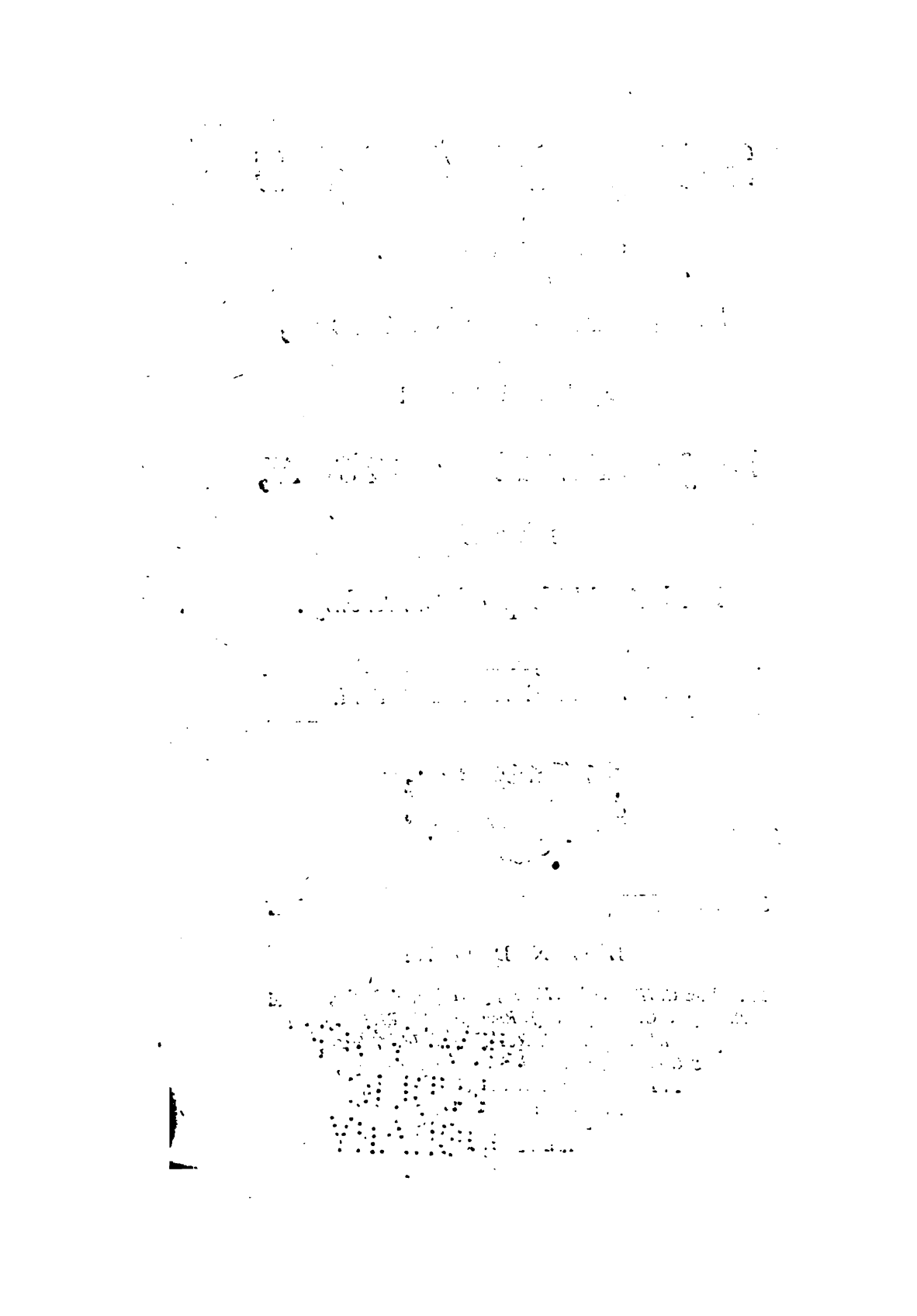
MDCCLVII.



SERMON LIX.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

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The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Have already made entrance into theſe words, which I told you do contain in them,

Firſt, An exhortation "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering."

Secondly, An argument or encouragement thereto; "becauſe he is faithful that promiſed." If we continue ſtedfaſt and faithful to God, we ſhall find him faithful to us, in making good all the promiſes which he hath made to us, whether of aid and ſupport, or of recompence and reward of our fidelity to him.

I have begun to handle the firſt part of the text, viz. the apoſtle's exhortation to Chriſtians to be conſtant and ſteady in their religion: "Let us "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wa-"vering." The word ἀκλινῆ, which we render without wavering, ſignifies inflexible and unmoveable, not apt to waver, and to be ſhaken with every wind of contrary doctrine, nor by the blaſts and ſtorms of perſecution. And that we might the better comprehend the full and true meaning of

SERM. LIX. this exhortation, I propounded to do theſe two things.

I. To ſhew negatively, wherein this conſtancy and ſteadineſs in the profeſſion of the true religion doth not conſiſt. And,

II. To ſhew poſitively, what is implied and intended here by the apoſtle, "in holding faſt the "profeſſion of our faith without wavering."

I. To ſhow negatively, wherein this conſtancy and ſteadineſs in the profeſſion of the true religion doth not conſiſt. This I ſpake to the laſt day; and ſhewed at large, that there are two things which are not contained and intended in this exhortation.

1. That men ſhould not have the liberty to examine their religion, and to enquire into the grounds and reaſons of it; ſuch I mean as are capable of this examination and enquiry; which ſome, I ſhewed, are not; as children, who while they are in that ſtate, are only fit to learn and believe what is taught them by their parents and teachers: and likewiſe ſuch grown perſons, as either by the natural weakneſs of their faculties, or by ſome great diſadvantage of education, are of a very low and mean capacity and improvement of underſtanding. Theſe are to be conſidered as in the condition of children and learners; and therefore muſt of neceſſity truſt and rely upon the judgment of others.

2. "This holding faſt the profeſſion of our "faith without wavering," does not imply, that when men upon examination and enquiry are ſettled, as they think and verily believe, in the true religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon that can be offered againſt them. Both theſe principles I ſhewed to be unreaſonable, and arguments of a bad cauſe and religion.

I ſhall

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I ſhall now proceed to explain the meaning of this exhortation, "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith without wavering," by ſhewing in the

Second place, what it is that is implied in the conſtant and ſteady profeſſion of the true faith and religion: namely, that when upon due ſearch and examination, we are fully ſatisfied, that it is the true religion which we have embraced, or as St. Peter expreſſes it. 1ſt epiſtle v. 12. "that this is the "true grace of GOD, wherein we ſtand;" that then we ſhould adhere ſtedfaſtly to it, and hold it faſt, and not ſuffer it to be wreſted from us, nor our ſelves to be moved from it, by any pretences or inſinuations, or temptations whatſoever. For there is a great deal of difference between the confidence and ſtedfaſtneſs of an ignorant man, who hath never conſidered things, and enquired into the grounds of them; and the aſſurance and ſettlement of one, who hath been well inſtructed in his religion, and hath taken pains to ſearch and examine to the bottom, the grounds and reaſons of what he holds and profeſſeth to believe. The firſt is mere wilfulneſs and obſtinacy. A man hath entertained, and drank in ſuch principles of religion by education, or hath taken them up by chance; but he hath no reaſon for them: and yet however he came by them, he is reſolved to hold them faſt, and not to part with them. The other is the reſolution and conſtancy of a wiſe man. He hath embraced his religion upon good grounds, and he ſees no reaſon to alter it; and therefore is reſolved to ſtick to it, and to hold faſt the profeſſion of it ſtedfaſtly to the end. And to this purpoſe there are many exhortations and cautions ſcattered up and down the writings of the holy apoſtles; as that we ſhould be "ſtedfaſt and

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" unmoveable, eſtabliſhed in the truth, rooted and " grounded in the faith," and that we ſhould " hold faſt that which is good," and not ſuffer our ſelves " to be carried to and fro with every wind of " doctrine, through the ſlight of men, and the cun- " ning craftineſs of thoſe that lye in wait to de- " ceive; that we ſhould not be removed from him " that hath called us unto the grace of CHRIST, " unto another goſpel; that we ſhould ſtand faſt in " one ſpirit and one mind, ſtriving together for the " faith of the goſpel, and be in nothing terrified by " our adverſaries;" and that, if occaſion be, we ſhould " contend earneſtly for the faith which was " once delivered unto the ſaints;" and here in the text, that we ſhould, " hold faſt the profeſſion of " our faith without wavering." For the explain- ing of this, I ſhall do two things:

I. Conſider what it is that we are to hold faſt; namely, " the profeſſion of our faith;" and

II. How we are to hold it faſt, or what is im- plied " in holding faſt the profeſſion of our faith, " without wavering."

I. What it is that we are to hold faſt; namely, " the profeſſion of our faith;" i. e. of the chriſtian faith or religion: for, I told you before, that this profeſſion or confeſſion of our faith, or hope (as the word properly ſignifies) is an alluſion to that profeſ- ſion of faith which was made by all thoſe who were admitted members of the chriſtian church by bap- tiſm; of which the apoſtle makes mention immedi- ately before the text, when he ſays, " let us draw " near in full aſſurance of faith, having our hearts " ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and our bodies " waſhed with pure water:" and then it follows, " let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith with-

" out

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"out wavering." The profeſſion of faith which we made in our baptiſm, and which by the ancient fathers is called the rule of faith, and which is now contained in that which we call the apoſtle's creed; and which is called by St. Paul, Rom. vi. 17. the "form of doctrine which was delivered to them;" i. e. to all Chriſtians; and 2 Tim. i. 13. the form "of ſound words; hold faſt, ſaith he, the form of "ſound words which thou haſt heard of me, in "faith and love which is in CHRIST JESUS;" and by St. Jude, "the faith which was once delivered "unto the ſaints."

So that it is the firſt and ancient faith of the chriſtian church, delivered to them by CHRIST and his apoſtles, which we are here exhorted to hold faſt; the neceſſary and fundamental articles of the chriſtian faith; and by conſequence all thoſe truths which have a neceſſary connexion with thoſe articles, and are implied in them, and by plain conſequence are to be deduced from them. It is not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men; nor the partial dictates and doctrines of any church, ſince the primitive times, which are not contained in the holy ſcriptures and the ancient creeds of the chriſtian church, but have been ſince declared and impoſed upon the chriſtian world; though with never ſo confident a pretence of antiquity in the doctrines, and of infallibility in the propoſers of them: theſe are no part of that faith which we are either to profeſs, or to hold faſt; becauſe we have no reaſon to admit the pretences, by virtue whereof thoſe doctrines or practices are impoſed; being able to make it good, and having effectually done it, that thoſe doctrines are not of primitive antiquity; and that the church which propoſeth them, hath no more claim to infal-

SERM. IX. libility, than all other parts of the chriſtian church; which ſince the apoſtles time is none at all.

In a word; no other doctrines which are not ſufficiently revealed in ſcripture, either in expreſs terms or by plain and neceſſary conſequence; nor any rites of worſhip, nor matters of practice, which are not commanded in ſcripture, are to be eſteemed any part of that faith in religion, the profeſſion whereof the apoſtle here commands all Chriſtians "to hold faſt "without wavering;" much leſs any doctrines or practices, which are repugnant to the word of GOD, and to the faith and practice of the firſt ages of Chriſtianity; of which kind I ſhall have occaſion in my following diſcourſe to inſtance in ſeveral particulars. In the mean time I ſhall only obſerve, that that faith and religion which we profeſs, and which by GOD's grace we have ever held faſt, is that which hath been acknowledged by all chriſtian churches in all ages, to have been the ancient catholick and apoſtolick faith, and cannot (as to any part or tittle of it) be denied to be ſo, even by the church of Rome herſelf.

I proceed to the

IId thing which I propoſed to conſider; namely, how we are to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, or what is implied by the apoſtle in this exhortation, "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, without "wavering." And I think theſe following particulars may very well be ſuppoſed to be implied in it.

1. That we ſhould hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport their confidence.

2. And much more againſt the confidence of men, contrary to ſcripture, and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind.

3. Againſt

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3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms in another religion.

5. Againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proſelytes to their own party and faction. I ſhall go over theſe with as much clearneſs and brevity as I can.

1. We ſhould hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport that confidence. All religion is either natural or inſtituted. The rule of natural religion is the common reaſon of mankind: the rule of inſtituted religion is divine revelation, or the word of GOD; which all Chriſtians before the council of Trent did agree to be contained in the holy ſcriptures. So that nothing can pretend to be religion, but what can be proved to be ſo, one or both of thoſe ways; either by ſcripture or by reaſon, or by both. And how confident ſoever men may be of opinions deſtitute of this proof; any man that underſtands the grounds of religion, will without any more ado reject them, for want of this proof; and notwithſtanding any pretended authority or infallibility of the church that impoſeth them, will have no more conſideration and regard of them, than of the confident dictates and aſſertions of any Enthuſiaſt whatſoever; becauſe there is no reaſon to have regard to any man's confidence, if the arguments and reaſons which he brings bear no proportion to it. We ſee in experience that confidence is generally ill grounded, and is a kind of paſſion in the underſtanding, and is commonly made uſe of, like fury and force, to ſupply

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ply for the weakneſs and want of argument. If a man can prove what he ſays by good argument; there is no need of confidence to back and ſupport it. We may at any time truſt a plain and ſubſtantial reaſon, and leave it to make its own way, and to bear out itſelf. But if the man's reaſons and arguments be not good; his confidence adds nothing of real force to them, in the opinion of wiſe men, and tends only to it's own confuſion. Arguments are like powder, which will carry and do execution according to its true ſtrength; and all the reſt is but noiſe. And generally none are ſo much to be ſuſpected of error, or a deſign to deceive, as thoſe that pretend moſt confidently to inſpiration and infallibility: as we ſee in all ſorts of enthuſiaſts, who pretend to inſpiration, although we have nothing but their own word for it; for they work no miracles, and all pretence to inſpiration and infallibility, without miracle, whether it be in particular perſons, or in whole churches, is enthuſiaſtical; i. e. a pretence to inſpiration without any proof of it.

And therefore St. Paul was not moved by the boaſting and confidence of the falſe apoſtles; becauſe they gave no proof and evidence of their divine inſpiration and commiſſion, as he had done; for which he appeals to the ſenſe of men, whether he had not wrought great miracles; which the falſe apoſtles had not done, though they had the confidence to give out themſelves to be apoſtles as well as he; 2. Cor. xii. 11, 12. "I am (ſays he) become a fool in glo-"rying, ye have compelled me. And truly the "ſigns of an apoſtle were wrought among you in "all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty "deeds." And Rev. ii. 2. CHRIST there commends the church of Epheſus, becauſe "ſhe had

"tried

" tried them, which ſaid they were apoſtles, but " were not; and had found them liars." And as we are not to believe every one that ſays he is an apoſtle, ſo neither every one that pretends to be a ſucceſſor of the apoſtles, and to be endued with the ſame ſpirit of infallibility that they were; for theſe alſo, when they are tried whether they be the ſucceſſors of the apoſtles or not, may be found liars. And therefore St. John cautions Chriſtians not to believe every ſpirit, (that is, every one that pretends to divine inſpiration and the ſpirit of GOD) " but " to try the ſpirits, whether they be of GOD; be- " cauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the " world," 1 John iv. 1. And therefore the confidence of men in this kind ought not to move us, when their pretence to infallibility is deſtitute of the proper proof and evidence of it, which is a power of miracles; and when their doctrines and practices have neither the evidence of reaſon or ſcripture on their ſide. SERM. LIX.

For inſtance; that the church of Rome is the mother and miſtreſs of all churches; which is one of the new articles of pope Pius the IVth's creed; and yet there is not one ſyllable in ſcripture tending to this purpoſe. And in reaſon it cannot be, that any but that which was the firſt chriſtian church ſhould be the mother of all churches; and that the church of Rome certainly was not, and the church of Jeruſalem undoubtedly was.

And then that the biſhop of Rome, as ſucceſſor of St. Peter there, is the ſupreme and univerſal paſtor of CHRIST's church by divine appointment, as he aſſumes to himſelf; and that it is neceſſary to ſalvation, for every human creature to be ſubject to the biſhop of Rome, as is declared in their canon-law by a con-

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a conſtitution of pope Boniface the VIIIth, which conſtitution is confirmed in the laſt Lateran council; of all which there is not the leaſt mention in ſcripture, nor any divine appointment to that purpoſe to be found there. And it is againſt reaſon, that all the world ſhould be obliged to trudge to Rome for the deciſion of cauſes and differences, which in many and the moſt weighty matters are reſerved to the deciſion of that ſee, and can be determined no where elſe. And againſt reaſon likewiſe it is to found this univerſal ſupremacy in his being ſucceſſor of St. Peter; and to fix it in the biſhop of Rome, rather than at Antioch; when it is certain, and granted by themſelves, that St. Peter was firſt biſhop of Antioch, and out of all queſtion that he was biſhop of Antioch; but not ſo, that he was biſhop of Rome.

Nor is there any thing in ſcripture for the deliverance of ſouls out of purgatory by the prayers and maſſes of the living. The whole thing is groundleſs, and not agreeable to the conſtant ſuppoſitions of ſcripture concerning a future ſtate. Nor is there any reaſon for it, beſides that which is not fit to be given, the wealth and profit which it brings in.

The invocation and worſhip of the bleſſed virgin, and of all the ſaints departed, is deſtitute of all ſcripture-warrant or example, and confeſſed by themſelves not to have been owned or practiſed in the three firſt ages of the church, becauſe it looked too like the heathen idolatry; which deſerves to be well conſidered by thoſe, who pretend to derive their whole religion from CHRIST and his apoſtles by a continued and uninterrupted ſucceſſion. And this practice is likewiſe deſtitute of all colour of reaſon; unleſs we be aſſured, that they hear our prayers in all places; which we cannot be, unleſs they be preſent in all places,

places, which they themſelves do not believe; or that GOD doth ſome way or other reveal and make known to them the prayers which are made to them, which we canot poſſibly be aſſured of, but by ſome revelation of GOD to that purpoſe; which we no where find, nor doth the church of Rome pretend to it. SERM. LIX.

But I proceed to the

2d Thing; namely, that we ſhould much more "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith" and religion, againſt the confidence of men, contrary to ſcripture, and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind. For theſe are the chief grounds of certainty, which we can have for or againſt any thing; and if theſe be clearly on our ſide, we ought not to be much moved by the confidence of men, concerning any doctrines or practices of religion, which are plainly contrary to theſe. If in points wherein we have this advantage on our ſide, we do not "hold faſt "the profeſſion" of our religion; our error and folly are capable of no excuſe. And this advantage we plainly have in ſeveral points and controverſies betwixt us and the church of Rome.

As in the worſhip of images; which is as expreſly and clearly forbidden in the ſecond commandment, and that without any diſtinction, as any other thing is forbidden in the whole bible. And that it is ſo forbidden in this commandment, and that this commandment is ſtill in force among Chriſtians, was the univerſal ſenſe of the ancient chriſtian church.

Prayers and the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue are directly contrary to the very nature and end of religious worſhip, which ought to be a reaſonable ſervice; which it cannot be, if it be not directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with

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with our hearts and affections: but if it be performed in an unknown tongue, our underſtanding can have no part in it; and if we do not underſtand it, it cannot move our affections. And this likewiſe is plainly contrary to ſcripture; namely, to a large diſcourſe of St. Paul's, almoſt throughout a whole chapter, where he purpoſely ſets himſelf to ſhew the unprofitableneſs and groſs abſurdity of praying, or celebrating any other part of religious worſhip in an unknown tongue. If any part of our religion had been half ſo clearly condemned in ſcripture, as this is (which yet is the conſtant and general practice of the church of Rome) we muſt have "lain down in our ſhame, and confuſion would "have covered us;" and we muſt either have rejected the authority of the bible, or have renounced that point of our religion, whatever it had been; though it had been dear to us as our right hand, and our right eye, we muſt upon ſuch plain evidence of ſcripture againſt it, have "cut it off, and plucked "it out, and caſt it from us."

The like may be ſaid of locking up the ſcriptures from the people in an unknown tongue, contrary to the command of the ſcriptures themſelves, and to the great end and deſign of Almighty GOD in the writing and publiſhing of them; and contrary to the perpetual exhortations and councils of all the ancient fathers of the chriſtian church for a great many ages, not one excepted. They are hardly more frequent, and copious, and earneſt in any argument; than in perſuading people of all ranks and conditions, to the conſtant and careful reading of the holy ſcriptures. And contrary to the common reaſon and ſenſe of mankind. For what ſhould men be perſuaded to be acquainted withal; if not with that

which

which is the great inſtrument of our ſalvation? That book which was written on purpoſe to reveal and convey to men the knowledge of GOD, and of his will, and their duty? What ſhould men be allowed to know; if not that which is the beſt and moſt effectual means, to direct and bring them to heaven, or turn them from ſin, and to preſerve them from eternal miſery? When our SAVIOUR would repreſent the beſt and moſt effectual means of bringing men to happineſs, and ſaving them from the eternal torments of hell, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he brings in Abraham, giving the beſt advice he could to the rich man who was in hell, concerning his brethren that were upon earth, how they might prevent their coming into that place of torment; and he directs them to the ſcriptures, as the beſt and moſt effectual means to that purpoſe: "They have (ſays he) Moſes and the prophets; "let them hear them." SERM. LIX.

Now if in the church of GOD, among the Jews, the ſame courſe had been taken, that is now in the church of Rome; the rich man might, and in all reaſon ought to have replied, "Nay, father Abra-"ham; but they have not Moſes and the pro-"phets, nor are they permitted to read them in a "language that they can underſtand; and there-"fore this advice is of no uſe to them:" and then he might with reaſon have preſs'd him, as he did, that "one might be ſent to them from the dead, to "teſtify unto them." But it appears that Abraham was very poſitive and peremptory in this advice; and that he prefers the knowledge of the ſcriptures, to any other way or means, that could be thought of; and that if this had not its effect to perſuade men to repentance, and to preſerve them from

SERM. LIX. from hell, he did not know any thing elſe that was ſo likely to do it: for he concludes, "If they hear "not Moſes and the prophets; neither will they "be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead." And this is the concluſion of the parable; which plainly ſhews, what was the main ſcope and deſign of our SAVIOUR in it; namely, to recommend to us the uſe of the holy ſcriptures, as the beſt and moſt effectual means, which the wiſdom of GOD hath provided for the ſalvation of mankind.

And now any man would be apt to think, that the declared judgment of our SAVIOUR in the caſe ſhould go a great way; even with the moſt infallible church in the world. However this we muſt ſay, that it is in truth a very hard caſe, to which the church of Rome hath reduced men; that it will neither allow them ſalvation out of their church, nor the beſt and moſt effectual means of ſalvation, when they are in it. I might ſay much more upon this head; but this I hope may be ſufficient.

The next inſtance ſhall be in the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; which is contrary to the ſcriptures, which after conſecration ſo frequently call the elements bread and wine; and which, without reaſon or neceſſity, puts an abſurd and impoſſible ſenſe upon thoſe words of our SAVIOUR, "This is my "body;" which do no more prove tranſubſtantiation; than thoſe words, "This cup is the new "teſtament," do prove that the material cup which was uſed in the ſacrament, was ſubſtantially changed into the new teſtament; and no more, than thoſe texts which affirm GOD to have eyes, and ears, and hands, do prove that he really hath ſo. But beſides the contrariety of this doctrine to ſcripture, nothing can be more repugnant to reaſon. It is ſo

big

big with contradictions, and ſo ſurfeited of impoſ- SERM. LIX.
ſibilities, that it would be endleſs to reckon them up. And beſides all this, it plainly contradicts the clear and conſtant evidence of four of our five ſenſes; which whoever contradicts, undermines the foundation of all certainty.

And then the communion in one kind is plainly contrary to our SAVIOUR's inſtitution of the ſacrament in both kinds; as they themſelves acknowledge. And therefore the council of Conſtance, being ſenſible of this, was forced to decree it with an expreſs *non obſtante* to the inſtitution of CHRIST, and the practice of the apoſtles and the primitive church. And their doctrine of concomitancy (as if the blood were in the fleſh, and together with it) will not help the matter: becauſe in the ſacrament CHRIST's body is repreſented as broken, and pierced, and exhauſted, and drained of its blood; and his blood is repreſented as ſhed and poured out; ſo that one kind can by no means contain and exhibit both.

The next inſtance is, the repetition of CHRIST's propitiatory ſacrifice in the maſs, ſo often as that is celebrated: againſt all reaſon; becauſe the ſacrifice of CHRIST once offered upon the croſs, was a full and perfect propitiation for the ſins of the whole world; and therefore ought not, becauſe it needs not, to be again repeated for that end, in any manner whatſoever. And it is directly contrary to the main ſcope of a great part of this epiſtle to the Hebrews, which ſhews the excellency of the goſpel above the law in this reſpect, that the expiatory ſacrifice of the goſpel was offered once for all; whereas the ſacrifices of the law were perpetually repeated.

SERM. LIX.

Chap. vii. 27. ſpeaking of CHRIST; "who needs "not daily, as thoſe high-prieſts, to offer up ſa- "crifices; firſt for his own ſins, and then for the "people's: for this he did once when he offered "up himſelf. Chap. ix. 26. "But once in the "end of the world hath he appeared, to take away "ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf: and as it is ap- "pointed for all men once to die, ſo CHRIST "was once offered to bear the ſins of many." And chap, x. 10. "By the which will we are ſanctified, "through the offering of the body of JESUS "CHRIST once for all:" and verſe the 12th, "But this man, after he had offered one ſacrifice "for ſins, for ever ſat down on the right hand of "GOD." And verſe the 14th, "For by one of- "fering he hath perfected for ever them that are "ſanctified." There cannot be plainer texts for any thing in the bible, than that this propitiatory ſacrifice was never to be repeated.

And whereas they ſay, that the ſacrifice of the maſs is an unbloody ſacrifice: this, inſtead of bring- ing them off, doth but intangle the matter more. For if blood be offered in the ſacrifice of the maſs, how is it an unbloody ſacrifice? What can be more bloody than blood? And if blood be not offered, how is it propitiatory? Since the apoſtle lays it down for a certain rule, that "without ſhedding of blood, "there is no remiſſion" of ſins; i. e. there can be no propitiation for the ſins of the living or the dead, which the church of Rome affirms there is.

I might have added one or two inſtances more; and then ſhould have proceeded to ſhew, in the third place, that we are to "hold faſt the profeſſion of "our faith without wavering," againſt all the temp- tations

tations and terrors of the world; which is more eſpecially and principally here intended by the apoſtle in this exhortation.

But I ſhall proceed no farther at preſent.

SERMON LX.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

SERM. LX. The third ſermon on this text.

IN theſe words, I have told you, are contained Firſt, an exhortation to "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, or hope, without wavering."

Secondly, an argument or encouragement thereto; "becauſe he is faithful that promiſed." I am yet upon the firſt of theſe; the exhortation to Chriſtians, to be conſtant and ſteady in the profeſſion of their religion: "let us hold faſt the profeſſion of "our faith without wavering." And that we might the better comprehend the true and full meaning of this exhortation, I ſhewed,

Firſt, negatively, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned theſe two particulars.

1. The apoſtle doth not hereby intend, that thoſe who are capable of enquiring into, and examining

SERM. LX. the grounds of their religion, ſhould not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due enquiry and examination, men are ſettled, as they think and verily believe, in the true faith and religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon that can be offered againſt their preſent perſuaſion. Both theſe I ſhewed to be unreaſonable, and arguments of a bad cauſe and religion: and therefore neither of them can be intended by the apoſtle in this exhortation.

Secondly, I proceeded poſitively to explain the meaning of this exhortation. And to this purpoſe I propoſed,

I. To conſider what it is, that we are to hold faſt, viz. the confeſſion or "profeſſion of our faith." The ancient chriſtian faith, of which every Chriſtian makes profeſſion in his baptiſm: for of that the apoſtle here ſpeaks, as appears by the context; not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the impious dictates and doctrines of any church, not contained in the holy ſcriptures, impoſed upon the chriſtian church; though with never ſo confident a pretence of the antiquity of the doctrines propoſed, or of the infallibility of the propoſers of them. And then I proceeded in the

II. Place, to ſhew how we are "to hold faſt the "profeſſion of our faith without wavering." And I mentioned theſe following particulars, as probably implied in the apoſtle's exhortation.

1. That we ſhould "hold faſt the profeſſion of "our faith," againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport their confidence.

2. And much more againſt the confidence of men, againſt ſcripture and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind.

3. Againſt

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3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms, in another religion.

5. Againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proſelytes to their party and faction.

1. We are "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith," againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport their confidence. And of this I gave ſeveral inſtances. As in the pretence of the church of Rome to infallibility, without any proof or evidence of it, either by ſcripture or miracles: I mean ſuch miracles, as are ſufficiently atteſted. For as for their legends, ſince the wiſeſt among themſelves give no credit to them, I hope, they do not expect that we ſhould believe them, or be moved by them. And then their pretence that the church of Rome is the mother or miſtreſs of all churches; which is now made an article of their creed. And that the biſhop of Rome, as ſucceſſor of St. Peter there, is by divine appointment the ſupreme and univerſal paſtor of CHRIST's church. And that it is neceſſary to ſalvation, for every human creature to be ſubject to him. And laſtly, their invocation and worſhip of the bleſſed virgin, and ſaints departed; without any warrant or example of any ſuch thing, either in ſcripture, or in the practice of the firſt ages of the chriſtian religion; and without ſufficient ground to believe that they hear the prayers which are put up to them.

2. Much more are we "to hold faſt the profeſ- "ſion of our faith," againſt the confidence of men,

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contrary to ſcripture and reaſon and the common ſenſe of mankind. And here I inſtanced in the worſhip of images; the locking up of the ſcriptures from the people; and celebrating the publick prayers and ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue; in their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, their communion in one kind, and their daily repetition in the ſacrifice of the maſs, of the propitiatory ſacrifice of CHRIST; which was offered "once for all," and is of eternal virtue and efficacy, and therefore ought not, becauſe it needs not, like Jewiſh ſacrifices under the law, to be repeated.

To theſe inſtances, which I have already ſpoken to, I ſhall add one or two more; as namely, that to the due adminiſtration of the ſacraments, an intention in the miniſter at leaſt to do what the church does, is requiſite. This is expreſly defined, and under an anathema upon all that ſhall ſay otherwiſe, by the council of Trent, ſeſſ. the ſeventh, can. 11th; which is to make the validity and virtue of the ſacraments to depend upon the intention of the prieſt or miniſter. So that if in the adminiſtration of baptiſm, he do not intend to baptize the party he pretends to baptize, then it is no baptiſm, and conſequently the perſon baptized is not made a member of CHRIST's church; nor is any grace or ſpecial benefit conferred upon him; nor is he a Chriſtian. So likewiſe in the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper, if the prieſt do not intend to conſecrate the hoſt, then is it no ſacrament; and they that receive it, receive no benefit by it; and (which according to their opinion is a dreadful conſequence) by the words of conſecration, there is no change made of the elements into the body and blood of CHRIST, and conſequently they that give adoration to the ſacrament

ment in ſuch caſes, worſhip bread and wine, for GOD; which is idolatry. And ſo likewiſe in their ſacrament of penance, though the prieſt pronounce the words of abſolution; yet if he do not intend to abſolve the penitent, though he be never ſo truly penitent, and GOD on his part is ready to forgive him; yet if the prieſt do not intend to do ſo, there is nothing done, and the man is ſtill in his ſin. So likewiſe in ordination (which is another of their ſacraments) if the biſhop do not intend to ordain the man; he is no prieſt, and all that he does as a prieſt afterwards, either in adminiſtration of baptiſm, or the LORD'S ſupper, or the abſolution of penitents, all is vain, and of no effect. Nay, in marriage (which they will needs have to be a ſacrament too) if the intention of the prieſt be wanting; there is nothing done, the contract is nulled, and they that are ſo married do really live in adultery; though they do not know it, nor have any ſuſpicion of it. SERM. LX.

Now this is contrary to ſcripture and the whole tenour of the goſpel, which promiſeth the benefit and efficacy of the ſacraments, to all thoſe that perform the conditions of the covenant which are required on their parts, and declares forgiveneſs of ſins to thoſe who confeſs them to GOD, and truly repent of them.

And there is not the leaſt intimation given in the bible, that the virtue and efficacy of the ſacraments does depend upon the intention of him that adminiſters them; or that the forgiveneſs of ſins is ſuſpended upon the intention or abſolution of the prieſt; but only upon the ſincere reſolution of the penitent. And ſurely nothing can be more abſurd, and contrary to reaſon, than that when men have performed all the conditions which the goſpel re-

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quires; yet they ſhould notwithſtanding this be deprived of all the bleſſings and benefits which GOD hath promiſed, and intends to confer upon them; becauſe the prieſt hath not the ſame intention. So that when a man hath done all that he can "to work out his own ſalvation," he ſhall be never the nearer; only for want of that which is wholly out of his power; the right intention of the prieſt.

Beſides, that after all their boaſts of the ſafe condition of men in their church, and the moſt certain and infallible means of ſalvation to be had in it; this one principle (that the intention of the prieſt is neceſſary to the validity and virtue of the ſacraments) puts the ſalvation of men upon the greateſt hazard and uncertainty; and ſuch as it is impoſſible for any man either to diſcover or prevent, unleſs he had ſome certain way to know the heart and intention of the prieſt. For upon theſe terms, who can know whether any man be a prieſt, and really ordained; or not? Nay, whether he be a Chriſtian, and have been truly baptized; or not? And conſequently whether any of his adminiſtrations be valid, and we have any benefit and advantage by them? Becauſe all this depends upon the knowledge of that, which we neither do nor can know.

So that when a man hath conſcientiouſly done all that GOD requires of any man, to make him capable of ſalvation; yet without any fault of his, the want of intention in an idle-minded man may fruſtrate all: and though the man hath been baptized, and do truly believe the goſpel, and hath ſincerely repented of his ſins, and lived a moſt holy life; yet all this may ſignify nothing, and after all he may be no Chriſtian; becauſe his baptiſm was invalid:

and

and all the promiſes of God as the means of ſalva- SERM. LX.
tion which his goodneſs and wiſdom hath preſcribed, may be of no efficacy; if the prieſt do not intend in the adminiſtration of the ſacraments to do that which God and the church intend.

Now if this be true; there is certainly no church in the world, in which the ſalvation of men runs ſo many hazards; and yet all this hazard and uncertainty has its riſe, from a ſcholaſtical point, which is directly contrary to all the notions of mankind concerning the goodneſs of God, and to the clear reaſon of the thing, and to the conſtant tenor of the goſpel; and which was never aſſerted by any of the ancient fathers; much leſs defined by any council before that of Trent: ſo that it is a doctrine new and heedleſs, and in the neceſſary conſequences of it unreaſonable and abſurd to the utmoſt degree.

The laſt inſtance I ſhall mention, is their rule of faith. The rule of faith univerſally received and acknowledged by the chriſtian church in all ages, before the council of Trent, was the word of God, contained in the canonical books of holy ſcripture; which were therefore by the church called canonical, becauſe they were the rule of faith and manners, of the doctrines to be believed, and the duties to be practiſed by all Chriſtians. But when the errors and corruptions of the Romiſh church were grown to the height, and the pope and his council at Trent were reſolved not to retrench and reform them, they ſaw it neceſſary to enlarge and lengthen out their rule; becauſe the ancient rule of the holy ſcriptures would by no means reach ſeveral of the doctrines and practices of that church, which they were reſolved to maintain and make good by one means or other: as namely, the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; of purga-

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purgatory; and of the ſeven ſacraments: and the practice of the worſhip of ſaints, and images; of the ſcriptures, and the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue; of indulgences; and the communion in one kind; and ſeveral other ſuperſtitious practices in uſe among them.

Now to enlarge their rule to the beſt advantage for the juſtification of theſe doctrines and practices, they took theſe two ways.

Firſt, they have added to the canonical books of the old teſtament, which were received by the Jewiſh church, (to whom were committed the oracles of GOD) I ſay to theſe they have added ſeveral apocryphal books not warranted by divine inſpiration, becauſe they were written after prophecy and divine inſpiration was ceaſed in the Jewiſh church; Malachi being the laſt of their prophets, according to the general tradition of that church. But becauſe the addition of theſe books did not make a rule of faith and practice large enough for their purpoſe; in imitation of the Jews, in the time of the greateſt confuſion and degeneracy of that church, they added in the

Second place to their books of ſcripture, which they call the written word, an unwritten word, which they call oral tradition from CHRIST and his apoſtles; which they declare to be of equal authority with the holy ſcriptures themſelves; and that it ought to be received with the ſame pious veneration and affection: of which traditions, they being the keepers and judges, they may extend them to what they pleaſe, and having them in their own breaſts, they may declare whatever they have a mind to, to have been a conſtant and univerſal tradition of their church; though it is evident to common ſenſe, that nothing

nothing can be more uncertain, and more liable to alteration and miſtake, than tradition, at the diſtance of ſo many ages, brought down by word of mouth, without writing, and paſſing through ſo many hands. He that can think theſe to be of equal certainty and authority with what is delivered by writing, and brought down by books, undertakes the defence of a ſtrange paradox, viz. that general rumour and report of things ſaid and done 1500 years ago, is of equal authority and credit with a record, and a written hiſtory. SERM. LX.

By which proceeding of the council of Trent, concerning the rule of faith and practice; it is very evident that they had no mind to bring their faith to the ancient rule, the holy ſcriptures. That they knew could not be done; and therefore they were reſolved to fit their rule to their faith. And this foundation being laid in their firſt decree, all the reſt would afterwards go on very ſmoothly. For do but give men the making of their rule, and they can make good any thing by it. And accordingly the council of Trent having thus fixt and fitted a rule to their own purpoſe; in the concluſion of that decree, they give the world fair warning, upon what grounds, and in what ways they intend to proceed in their following decrees of practice, and definitions of faith. *Omnes itaque intelligant, quo ordine & via ipſa ſynodus poſt jactum fidei confeſſionis fundamentum ſit progreſſura,* &c. "Be it known therefore to all men, in what "order and way the ſynod, after having laid this "foundation of the confeſſion of faith, will proceed; "and what teſtimonies and proofs ſhe chiefly in- "tends to make uſe of, for the confirmation of doc- "trines, and reformation of manners in the church." And no doubt all men do ſee very plainly to what

SERM. LX. purpoſe this foundation is laid of ſo large a rule of faith. And this being admitted, how eaſy is it for them to confirm and prove whatever doctrines and practices they have a mind to eſtabliſh?

But if this be a new, and another foundation, than that which the great author and founder of our religion hath laid and built his church upon, viz. "the "foundation of the prophets and apoſtles;" it is no matter what they build upon it. And if they go about to prove any thing by the new parts of this rule; by the apocryphal books which they have added to the ancient canon of the ſcriptures, brought down to us by the general tradition of the chriſtian church; and by their pretended unwritten traditions: we do with reaſon reject this kind of proof, and deſire them firſt to prove their rule, before they pretend to prove any thing by it: for we proteſt againſt this rule as never declared and owned by the chriſtian church, nor proceeded upon by the ancient fathers of the church, nor by any council whatſoever, before the council of Trent.

In vain then doth the church of Rome vaunt itſelf of the antiquity of their faith and religion; when the very foundation and rule of it is but of yeſterday; a new thing never before known or heard of in the chriſtian world: whereas the foundation and rule of our religion is the word of GOD, contained in the holy ſcriptures; to which Chriſtians in all ages have appealed, as the only rule of faith and life.

I proceed now to the

3. Thing I propoſed, viz. that we are "to hold "faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering," againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world. And this ſeems more eſpecially and principally to be here intended by the apoſtle in this exhortation.

I ſhall

I ſhall firſt ſpeak of the temptations of the world. And they are chiefly theſe two; the temptation of faſhion and example: and of wordly intereſt and advantage. SERM. LX.

1. Of faſhion and example. This in truth and reality is no ſtrong argument; and yet in experience and effect it is often found to be very powerful. It is frequently ſeen, that this hath many times too great an influence upon weak and fooliſh minds. Men are apt to be carried down with the ſtream, and to follow a multitude in that which is evil. But more eſpecially men are prone to be ſwayed by great examples; and to bend themſelves to ſuch an obſequiouſneſs to their ſuperiors and betters, that in compliance with them, they are ready not only to change their affection to perſons and things, as they do; but even their judgment alſo; and that in the greateſt and weightieſt matters, even in matters of religion, and the great concernments of another world. But this ſurely is an argument of a poor and mean ſpirit, and of a weak underſtanding, which leans upon the judgment of another, and is in truth the loweſt degree of ſervility, that a reaſonable creature can ſtoop too; and even beneath that of a ſlave, who in the midſt of his chains and fetters doth ſtill retain the freedom of his mind and judgment.

But I need not to urge this upon conſiderate perſons, who know better how to value their duty and obligation to GOD, than to be tempted to do any thing contrary thereto, merely in compliance with faſhion and example. There are ſome things in religion ſo very plain, that a wiſe and good man would ſtand alone in the belief and practice of them, and not be moved in the leaſt by the contrary example of the whole world. It was a brave reſolution of Joſhua; though

SERM. LX. though all men ſhould forſake the GOD of Iſrael, and run aſide to other gods, yet he would not do it, Joſhua xxiv. 15. "If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve "the LORD; chuſe you this day whom you will "ſerve: but as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve "the LORD." It was well reſolved of Peter, if he had not been too confident of his own ſtrength, when he ſaid to our SAVIOUR, "though all men "forſake thee, yet will not I."

2. Another ſort of temptation, and which is commonly more powerful than example, is worldly intereſt and advantage. This is a mighty bait to a great part of mankind, and apt to work very ſtrongly upon the neceſſities of ſome, and upon the covetouſneſs and ambition of others. Some men are tempted by neceſſity, which many times makes them do ugly and reproachful things, and like Eſau, "for "a morſel of meat to ſell their birth-right, and "bleſſing." Covetouſneſs tempts others to be of that religion which gives them the proſpect of the greateſt earthly advantage, either for the increaſing or ſecuring of their eſtates. When they find that they "cannot ſerve GOD and Mammon;" they will "forſake the one, and cleave to the other." This was one of the great temptations to many in the primitive times, and a frequent cauſe of apoſtaſy from the faith; an eager deſire of riches, and too great a value for them; as St. Paul obſerves, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. "But they that will be rich, fall into "temptation and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh "and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction "and perdition. For the love of money is the root "of all evil; which while ſome have coveted after, "they have erred, or been ſeduced from the faith, "and pierced themſelves through with many ſor-

"rows."

"rows." This was the temptation which drew off Demas from his religion; as St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. iv. 10. "Demas hath forſaken me, having loved "this preſent world."

Ambition is likewiſe a great temptation to proud and aſpiring minds, and makes many men falſe to their religion, when they find it a hindrance to their preferment; and they are eaſily perſuaded, that that is the beſt religion, which is attended with the greateſt worldly advantages, and will raiſe them to the higheſt dignity. The devil underſtood very well the force of this temptation, when he ſet upon our SAVIOUR, and therefore reſerved it for the laſt aſſault. "He "ſhewed him all the kingdoms of the earth, and "the glory of them; and ſaid to him, all this will "I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip "me." And when he ſaw this would not prevail, he gave him over in deſpair, and left him. But though this be a very dazzling temptation; yet there are conſiderations of that weight to be ſet over againſt it, from the nature of religion, and the infinite concernment of it to our immortal ſouls, as is ſufficient to quench this fiery dart of the devil, and to put all the temptations of this world out of countenance, and to render all the riches and glory of it, in compariſon of the eternal happineſs and miſery of the other world, but as the very ſmall duſt upon the balance. What temptation of this world can ſtand againſt that argument of our SAVIOUR, if it be ſeriouſly weighed and conſidered; "what is a man "profited; if he gain the whole world, and loſe "his own ſoul?" or what ſhall a man give in ex- "change for his ſoul? If he would conſider things impartially, and weigh them in a juſt and equal balance; the things which concern our bodies, and this

SERM. LX. this preſent life, are of no conſideration, in compariſon of the great and vaſt concernments of our immortal ſouls, and the happy or miſerable condition of our bodies and ſouls to all eternity.

And religion is a matter of this vaſt concernment; and therefore not to be bargained away and parted with by us for the greateſt things this world can offer. There is no greater ſign of a ſordid ſpirit, than to put a high value upon things of little worth; and no greater mark of folly, than to make an equal bargain, to part with things of greateſt price, for a ſlender and trifling conſideration: as if a man of great fortune and eſtate, ſhould ſell the inheritance of it for a picture; which when he hath it, will not perhaps yield ſo much as will maintain him for one year. The folly is ſo much the greater in things of infinitely greater value; as for a man to quit God and religion, to ſell the truth and his ſoul, and to part with his everlaſting inheritance, for a convenient ſervice for a good cuſtomer, and ſome preſent advantage in his trade and profeſſion, or indeed for any condition which the fooliſh language of this world calls a high place, or a great preferment. The things which theſe men part with upon theſe cheap terms, God, and his truth, and religion, are to thoſe who underſtand themſelves, and the juſt value of their immortal ſouls, things of ineſtimable worth, and not to be parted with by a conſiderate man for any price that this world can bid. And thoſe who are to be bought out of their religion, upon ſuch low terms, and ſo eaſily parted from it, it is much to be feared that they have little or no religion to hold faſt.

Secondly, "As we are to hold faſt the profeſſion "of our faith without wavering," againſt the temptations

tations and allurements of this world; ſo likewiſe againſt the terrors of it. SERM. LX.

Fear is a paſſion of great force; and if men be not very reſolute and conſtant, will be apt to ſtagger them, and "to move them from their ſtedfaſtneſs." And therefore when the caſe of ſuffering and perſecution for the truth happens, we had need "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith." Our SAVIOUR in the parable of the ſower tells us, that there were many "that heard the word, and with "joy received it: but when perſecution and tribu-"lation aroſe becauſe of the word, preſently they "were offended."

And though, bleſſed be GOD, this be not now our caſe: yet there was a time when it was the general caſe of Chriſtians, in the firſt beginning of Chriſtianity, and for ſeveral ages after, though with ſome intermiſſion and intervals of eaſe. It was then a general rule, and the common expectation of Chriſtians that through many tribulations they muſt enter into the kingdom of GOD; and that if any man will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, he muſt ſuffer perſecution. And in ſeveral ages ſince thoſe primitive times, the ſincere profeſſors of religion have, in divers places, been expoſed to moſt grievous ſufferings and perſecutions for the truth. And even at this day, in ſeveral places, the faithful ſervants of GOD are exerciſed with the ſharpeſt and ſoreſt trials that perhaps were ever heard of in any age; and for the ſake of GOD, and the conſtant profeſſion of his true religion, "are tormented and "killed all the day long, and are accounted as "ſheep for the ſlaughter." It is their hard lot to be called to theſe cruel and bitter ſufferings; and our happy opportunity to be called upon for their

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relief; thoſe of them, I mean, that have eſcaped that terrible ſtorm and tempeſt, and have taken refuge and ſanctuary here among us, and out of his majeſty's great humanity and goodneſs, are by his publick letters recommended to the charity of the whole nation, by the name of diſtreſſed proteſtants.

Let us conſider how much eaſier our lot and our duty is, than theirs; as much as it is eaſier to compaſſionate the ſufferings, and to relieve the diſtreſſes of others, than to be ſuch ſufferers, and in ſuch diſtreſs our ſelves. Let us make their caſe our own; and then we our ſelves will be the beſt judges, how it is fit for us to demean our ſelves towards them, and to what degree we ought to extend our charity and compaſſion to them. Let us put on their caſe and circumſtances; and ſuppoſe that we were the ſufferers, and had fled to them for refuge: the ſame pity and commiſeration, the ſame tender regard and conſideration of our ſad caſe, the ſame liberal and effectual relief that we ſhould deſire and expect, and be glad to have ſhewn and afforded to our ſelves, let us give to them; and then I am ſure they will want no fitting comfort and ſupport from us.

We enjoy (bleſſed be the goodneſs of GOD to us) great peace and plenty, and freedom from evil and ſuffering: and ſurely one of the beſt means, to have theſe bleſſings continued to us, and our tranquillity prolonged, is, to conſider and relieve thoſe who want the bleſſings which we enjoy; and the readieſt way to provoke GOD to deprive us of theſe bleſſings, is, to ſhut up the bowels of our compaſſion from our diſtreſſed brethren. GOD can eaſily change the ſcene, and make our ſufferings, if not in the ſame kind, yet in one kind or other equal

to

to theirs, and then we ſhall "remember the afflic- SERM. LX.
"tions of Joſeph," and ſay as his brethren did, when they fell into trouble, "We are verily guilty "concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the an- "guiſh of his ſoul when he beſought us, and we "would not hear; therefore is this diſtreſs come "upon us."

GOD alone knows what ſtorms the devil may yet raiſe in the world, before the end of it: And therefore it concerns all Chriſtians, in all times and places, who have taken upon them the profeſſion of CHRIST's religion, to conſider well before-hand, and to calculate the dangers and ſufferings it may expoſe them to, and to arm our ſelves with reſolution and patience againſt the fierceſt aſſaults of temptation; conſidering the ſhortneſs of all temporal afflictions and ſufferings, in compariſon of the eternal and glorious reward of them; and the lightneſs of them too, in compariſon of the endleſs and intolerable torments of another world; to which every man expoſeth himſelf, who forſakes GOD, and renounceth his truth, and wounds his conſcience, to avoid temporal ſufferings.

And though fear in many caſes, eſpecially if it be of death and extreme ſufferings, be a great excuſe for ſeveral actions; becauſe it may, *cadere in conſtantem virum*, happen to a reſolute man: yet in this caſe, of renouncing our religion (unleſs it be very ſudden and ſurpriſing, out of which a man recovers himſelf when he comes to himſelf (as St. Peter did; or the ſuffering be ſo extreme, as to put a man beſides himſelf for the time, ſo as to make him ſay or do any thing;) I ſay in this caſe of renouncing GOD and his truth, GOD will not admit fear for a juſt excuſe of our apoſtaſy; which, if it

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be unrepented of, (and the ſcripture ſpeaks of repentance in that caſe as very difficult) will be our ruin. And the reaſon is; becauſe GOD has given us ſuch fair warning of it, that we may be prepared for it, in the reſolution of our minds: and we enter into religion upon theſe terms, with a profeſſed expectation of ſuffering, and a firm purpoſe to lay down our lives for the truth, if GOD ſhall call us to it. "If any man will be my diſciple," ſays our LORD, "let him deny himſelf, and take up his "croſs, and follow me:" and again, "He that "loveth life itſelf more than me, is not worthy of "me: and if any man be aſhamed of me, and of "my words, in this unfaithful generation; of him "will I be aſhamed before my Father and the holy "angels."

And therefore to maſter and ſubdue this fear, our SAVIOUR hath propounded great objects of terror to us, and a danger infinitely more to be dreaded, which every man runs himſelf wilfully upon, who ſhall quit the profeſſion of his religion, to avoid temporal ſufferings; Luke xii. 4, 5. "Fear not "them that can kill the body, but after that have "nothing that they can do: but I will tell you "whom you ſhall fear. Fear him, who after he "hath killed, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in "hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." And to this dreadful hazard every man expoſeth himſelf, who, for the fear of men, ventures thus to offend GOD. Theſe are "the fearful and unbelievers", ſpoken of by St. John, "who ſhall have their portion in the "lake which burneth with fire and brim-"ſtone, which is the ſecond death."

Thus you ſee how we are to "hold faſt the pro-"feſſion of our faith without wavering," againſt all

all temptations and terrors of this world. I ſhould now have proceeded to the next particular; namely, that we are to "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith," againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes, of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms, in ſome other church and religion.

But this I ſhall not now enter upon.

SERMON LXI.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

IN theſe words, I have told you, are contained theſe two parts: SERM. LXI.

Firſt, an exhortation to "hold faſt the profeſſion "of our faith, without wavering." The fourth ſermon on this text.

Secondly, an argument or encouragement thereto; "becauſe he is faithful that promiſed." I am yet upon the

Firſt of theſe; the exhortation to Chriſtians, to be conſtant and ſteady in the profeſſion of their religion: "let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith "without wavering." And that we might the bet-

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ter comprehend the true and full meaning of this exhortation, I ſhewed,

Firſt, negatively, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned theſe two particulars.

1. The apoſtle doth not hereby intend, that thoſe who are capable of enquiring into, and examining the grounds and reaſons of their religion, ſhould not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due enquiry and examination, men are ſettled, as they think and verily believe, in the true faith and religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon that can be offered againſt their preſent perſuaſion: for reaſon, when it is fairly offered, is always to be heard. I proceeded in the

Second place, poſitively to explain the meaning of this exhortation. And to this purpoſe I propoſed to conſider,

Firſt, what it is, that we are to hold faſt, viz. the confeſſion or "profeſſion of our faith." The ancient chriſtian faith, which every Chriſtian makes profeſſion of in his baptiſm: not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the imperious dictates and doctrines of any church (which are not contained in the holy ſcriptures) impoſed upon the chriſtian world, though with never ſo confident a pretence of the antiquity of the doctrines, or of the infallibility of the propoſers of them. And then I proceeded, in the

Second place, to ſhew how we are "to hold faſt "the profeſſion of our faith without wavering;" and I mentioned theſe following particulars, as probably implied and comprehended in the apoſtle's exhortation.

1. That

1. That we ſhould "hold faſt the profeſſion of "our faith" againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport that confidence. SERM. LXI.

2. And much more againſt the confidence of men, contrary to plain ſcripture and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind; under both which heads I gave ſeveral inſtances of doctrines and practices impoſed with great confidence upon the world, ſome without, and others plainly againſt ſcripture, and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind.

3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world; the temptations of faſhion and example, and of worldly intereſt and advantage; and againſt the terrors of perſecution and ſuffering for the truth. Thus far I have gone. I ſhall now proceed to the two other particulars which remain to be ſpoken to.

4. We are to "hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith," againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms, in ſome other church and religion. GOD hath plainly declared to us in the holy ſcriptures, upon what terms and conditions we may obtain eternal life and happineſs, and what will certainly exclude us from it; that "except "we repent," (i. e.) without true contrition for our ſins, and forſaking of them. "we ſhall periſh; that "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD;" that "no fornicator, or adulterer, or idolater, or "covetous perſon, nor any one that lives in the "practice of ſuch ſins, ſhall have any inheritance "in the kingdom of GOD or CHRIST." There is as great and unpaſſable a gulf fixed between heaven and a wicked man; as there is betwixt heaven and hell. And when men have done all they can to de-

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bauch and corrupt the chriſtian doctrine, it is impoſſible to reconcile a wicked life with any reaſonable and well-grounded hopes of happineſs in another world. No church hath that privilege, to ſave a man upon any other terms, than thoſe which our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath declared in his holy goſpel. All religions are equal in this; that a bad man can be ſaved in none of them.

The church of Rome pretends their church and religion to be the only ſafe and ſure way to ſalvation; and yet, if their doctrine be true, concerning the intention of the prieſt, (and if it be not, they are much to blame in making it an article of their faith) I ſay, if it be true, that the intention of the prieſt is neceſſary to the validity and virtue of the ſacraments; then there is no religion in the world, that runs the ſalvation of men upon more and greater hazards and uncertainties, and ſuch as by no care and diligence of man in "working out his own ſalvation," are to be avoided and prevented.

As for the eaſier terms of ſalvation which they offer to men, they ſignify nothing, if they be not able to make them good; which no man can reaſonably believe they can do, that hath read the bible, and doth in any good meaſure underſtand the nature of GOD, and the deſign of religion. For inſtance; that after a long courſe of a moſt lewd and flagitious life, a man may be reconciled to GOD, and have his ſins forgiven at the laſt gaſp, upon confeſſion of them to the prieſt, with that imperfect degree of contrition for them, which they call attrition, together with the abſolution of the prieſt.

Now attrition is a trouble for ſin, merely for fear of the puniſhment of it. And this together with confeſſion, and the abſolution of the prieſt, without

any

any hatred of ſin for the evil and contrariety of it to the holy nature and law of GOD, and without the leaſt ſpark of love to GOD, will do the ſinner's buſineſs, and put him into a ſtate of grace and ſalvation, without any other grace or diſpoſition for ſalvation, but only the fear of hell and damnation. This, I confeſs, is eaſy: but the great difficulty is, to believe it to be true. And certainly, no man that ever ſeriouſly conſidered the nature of GOD and religion, can ever be perſuaded to build the hopes of his ſalvation upon ſuch a quick-ſand. The abſolution of all the prieſts in the world will not procure the forgiveneſs of GOD for any man, that is not diſpoſed for his mercy by ſuch a repentance, as the goſpel requires; which I am ſure is very different from that which is required by the council of Trent. SERM. LXI.

They that offer heaven to men upon ſo very large and looſe terms, give great cauſe to ſuſpect, that they will never make good their offer; the terms are ſo unreaſonably cheap and eaſy, that there muſt be ſome fraud and falſe dealing. And on the other hand, nothing ought to recommend our religion more to a wiſe and conſiderate man, than that the terms of ſalvation which we propoſe to men, viz. faith and repentance, and a ſincere obedience to the precepts of the goſpel, manifeſted in the tenure of a holy and virtuous life, are not only perfectly agreeable to the plain and conſtant declaration of holy ſcripture; but do likewiſe naturally tend to engage men moſt effectually to a good life, and thereby to make them "meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light." And therefore every body ought to be afraid of a religion, which makes ſuch laviſh offers of ſalvation, and to take heed how he ventures his ſoul upon them. For if, after

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after all the hopes that are given of ſalvation upon ſuch and ſuch terms, the ſinner doth really miſcarry and miſs of heaven; it is but very ill comfort to him, to be put into a fool's paradiſe, for a minute or two before he leaves the world, and the next moment after to find himſelf in the place of torments. I proceed to the

5. And laſt particular I mentioned, as implied in the exhortation here in the text, viz. that we ſhould "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering," againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proſelytes to their party and faction. To this purpoſe there are ſeveral cautions given by our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, Matth. xxiv. 4. "Take heed that no "man deceive you; for many ſhall come in my "name, and ſhall deceive many." Eph. iv. 14. "That ye henceforth be no more children, toſſed to "and fro, and carried about with every wind of doc-"trine, by the ſleight of men: ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ (the word ſignifies the cunning of gameſters at dice) "by the ſleight of men, and the cunning craftineſs "whereby they lye in wait to deceive." And chap. v. 6. "Let no man deceive you with vain words." Col. ii. 8. "Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through "philoſophy and vain deceit;" that is by ſophiſtry and vain reaſoning, under a pretence of philoſophy. Heb. xiii. 9. "Be not carried about with divers "and ſtrange doctrines." 2 Pet. iii. 17, "Beware "leſt you alſo, being led away with the error of the "wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs." And this caution is enforced by an expreſs prediction of a great apoſtaſy which ſhould happen in the chriſtian church, by which many ſhould be ſeduced, by pretence

tence of miracles, and by ſeveral arts of deceit and falſhood. This apoſtaſy St. Paul expreſly foretels, 2 Theſ. ii. 1, 2, 3. "We beſeech you, brethren, by "the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that "ye be not ſoon ſhaken in mind, or be troubled, "neither by ſpirit" (that is, by pretence to inſpiration) "nor by word" (or meſſage) "nor by letter "as from us, as that the day of CHRIST is at hand. "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that "day ſhall not come, except there come a falling "away, and that man of ſin be revealed, the ſon of "perdition." And after a particular deſcription of him, he adds, ver. 9. "Whoſe coming is after the "working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and "lying wonders, and in all deceitfulneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh." From all which he concludes, ver. 15. "Therefore, brethren, "ſtand faſt." SERM. LXI.

The particular nature and kind of this apoſtaſy the ſame apoſtle deſcribes more fully, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. "Now the ſpirit ſpeaketh expreſly, that in the latter "times ſome ſhall apoſtatize from the faith, giving "heed to ſeducing ſpirits and doctrines of devils, "ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy," (i. e. under a great pretence of ſanctity, ſpreading their pernicious errors) "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain "from meats." This is a very lively and pat deſcription of that great apoſtaſy in the chriſtian church, which began in the weſtern part of it, and hath ſpread itſelf far and wide. For there the ſpirit of error and falſhood has prevailed, under an hypocritical pretence of their being the only true church and true Chriſtians in the world. There marriage, and ſeveral ſorts of meats, are forbidden to ſeveral ranks and orders of men. All the difficulty is, what is here

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meant by "doctrines of devils;" and theſe certainly can be no other than doctrines tending to idolatry, which the ſcripture every where doth in a particular manner aſcribe to the devil, as the inventer and great promoter of it. And this is very much confirmed by what we find added in ſome ancient Greek copies in this text, which runs thus; "in the latter times "ſome ſhall apoſtatize from the faith; for they ſhall "worſhip the dead, as ſome alſo in Iſrael worſhip-"ped." And then it follows "giving heed to "ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils." So that the particular kind of idolatry, into which ſome part of the chriſtian church ſhould apoſtatize, is here pointed at; that they ſhould worſhip ſouls departed, or the ſpirits of dead men; which was part of the heathen idolatry, into which the people of Iſrael did frequently relapſe. So that the ſpirit of GOD doth here foretel ſuch an apoſtaſy in ſome part of the chriſtian church as the people of Iſrael were guilty of, in falling into the heathen idolatry. "They "ſhall be worſhippers of the dead, as the Iſraelites "alſo were."

And this is the great and dangerous ſeduction which the Chriſtians are ſo much cautioned againſt in the new teſtament, and charged "to hold faſt the "profeſſion of the faith" againſt the cunning arts and inſinuations of ſeducing ſpirits; not but (as I ſaid before) that we are always to have an ear open to reaſon, and to be ready to hearken and to yield to that, whenever it is fairly propoſed: but to be over-reached and rooked out of one's religion, by little ſophiſtical arts and tricks, is childiſh and ſilly. After we are, upon due trial and examination of the grounds of our religion, ſettled and eſtabliſhed in it, we ought not to ſuffer our ſelves to be removed from it, by the groundleſs

groundleſs pretences of confident people to infalli- SERM. LXI.
bility, and to be practiſed upon by cunning men, who lye at catch to make proſelytes to their party. This is to be "like children toſſed to and fro, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine."

And we ought to be the more careful of our ſelves; becauſe there never was any time, wherein ſeducing ſpirits were more bold and buſy to pervert men from the truth. Againſt theſe we ſhould hold faſt our religion, as a man would do his money in a croud. It paſſeth in the world for a great mark of folly, when a man and his money are ſoon parted: but it is a ſign of much greater folly, for a man eaſily to quit his religion; eſpecially to be caught by ſome ſuch groſs methods, as the ſeducers I am ſpeaking of commonly uſe, and which lye ſo very open to ſuſpicion; ſuch as ill-deſigning men are wont to practiſe upon a young heir, when they have inſinuated themſelves into his company, to make a prey of him. They charge him to tell no body in what company he hath been; nor to aſk the counſel and advice of his friends concerning what they have been perſuading him to; becauſe they for their own intereſt will be ſure to diſſuade him from it. Juſt thus do theſe ſeducers practiſe upon weak people. They charge them not to acquaint their miniſter, with whom they have been; nor what diſcourſe they have had about religion; nor what books have been put into their hands; becauſe then, all their kind deſign and intention towards them will be defeated. But above all, they muſt be ſure to read no books on the other ſide, becauſe they are no competent judges of points of faith; and this reading on both ſides will rather confound than clear their underſtandings. They tell them, that they have ſtated the matter truly,

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truly, and would not for all the world deceive them; and they may eaſily perceive, by their earneſt application to them, that nothing but charity, and a paſſionate deſire of the ſalvation of their ſouls, makes them take all theſe pains with them. But this is ſo groſs a way of proceeding, that any man of common underſtanding muſt needs diſcern by this kind treatment, that theſe men can have no honeſt deſign upon them.

To come then to a more particular conſideration of the arts and methods which they uſe (I mean particularly thoſe of the church of Rome) in making proſelytes to their religion: as,

1. In allowing them to be very competent and ſufficient judges for themſelves, in the choice of their church and religion, (that is, which is the true church and religion, in which alone ſalvation is to be had) and yet telling them at the ſame time, that they are utterly incapable of judging in particular doctrines, and points of faith and practice; but for theſe, they muſt rely upon the judgment of an infallible church, when they are in it; otherwiſe they will certainly run into damnable errors and miſtakes above theſe things.

And they muſt of neceſſity allow them to be ſufficient judges for themſelves in the choice of their religion; as will be evident, by conſidering in what method they proceed with their intended proſelyte.

They propoſe to him to change his church and his religion, becauſe he is in the wrong; and they will ſhew him a better, and ſuch a one as is the only true one, and in which alone ſalvation is to be had. To perſuade him hereto, they offer him ſome reaſons and arguments, or give him books to read, containing arguments to move him to make this change,

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to ſatisfy him of the reaſonableneſs, and to convince him of the neceſſity of it. SERM. LXI.

Now by this way of proceeding (and they can take no other) they do, whether they will or no, make the perſon, whom they are endeavouring to convert, a judge for himſelf, which church and religion is beſt; that which they would have him embrace and come over to, or that which they would perſuade him to forſake. For to what end elſe do they offer him reaſons and arguments to perſuade him to leave our church, and to come over to theirs; but that he may conſider the force and weight of them; and having conſidered them, may judge whether they be of force ſufficient to over-rule him to make this change? So that as unwilling as they are to make particular perſons judge for themſelves about points of faith, and about the ſenſe of ſcripture confirming thoſe points (becauſe this is to leave every man to his own private ſpirit and fancy and giddy brain) yet they are compelled by neceſſity, and againſt their own principles, to allow a man in this caſe of chuſing his religion, to be a judge of the reaſons and arguments which they offer to induce him thereto. So that, whether they will or no, they muſt permit him to be a judge for himſelf for this once, but not to make a practice of it, or to pretend this privilege ever after: for in acknowledgment of this great favour, of being permitted to judge for himſelf this once (which they do unwillingly grant him, and upon mere neceſſity) he is for ever after to reſign up his judgment to the church. And though this liberty be allowed *pro hac vice*, and properly to ſerve a turn, i. e. in order to the changing of his religion; yet he is to underſtand, that he is no fit and competent judge of particular points of faith; theſe he muſt

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But is there any ſenſe in all this, that a man ſhould be very fit and able to judge of that which they eſteem the main and fundamental point of all, namely, which is the true church and religion; and of the reaſons and arguments whereby they pretend to demonſtrate it; and of the true meaning of thoſe texts of ſcripture, whereby they pretend to prove theirs to be the only true church: and yet ſhould be wholly unable to judge of particular points of faith; or of the true ſenſe of any texts of ſcripture that can be produced for the proof of thoſe points?

Is it ſo very prudent, in all the particular points of faith, for a man to rely upon the judgment of the church, becauſe ſhe is infallible; and not to truſt his own judgment about them, becauſe he is fallible, and may be deceived? And is it prudent likewiſe for this man to truſt his own judgment in the main buſineſs of all; namely, which is the true church and religion; concerning which he is as fallible in his judgment, and as liable to be deceived, as in the particular points? And if he be miſtaken in the main point, they muſt grant his miſtake to be fatal; becauſe his ſincerity, as to all the reſt, depends upon it. This is a great myſtery and riddle, that every particular man ſhould have ſo ſufficient a judgment as to this main and fundamental buſineſs, which is the true church and religion; and ſhould have no judgment at all about particular points, fit to be truſted and relied upon: As if there were a certain judgment and prudence, *quoad hoc*; and as if all mens underſtandings were ſo framed, as to be very judi-

judicious and diſcerning in this main point of religion; but to be weak, and dangerous, and blind, as to all particular points: or, as if a man might have a very good judgment, and be fit to be truſted and relied upon, before he come into their church; but from the very moment he enters into it, his judgment were quite loſt and good for nothing: for this in effect and by interpretation they ſay, when they allow a man to be very able to judge which is the true church and religion; but ſo ſoon as he hath diſcovered and embraced that, to have no judgment of his own afterwards of any point of religion whatſoever; and a very tempting argument it is to any man that hath judgment, to enter into that church. SERM. LXI.

2. Another art they uſe with their intended proſelyte, in order to his making a right choice of his religion, is to caution him, to hear and read only the arguments and books which are on one ſide. But now admitting their deſigned proſelyte to be juſt ſuch a judge, and ſo far they will allow him to be, and no farther, viz. which is the true church; but to have no fitneſs and ability at all to judge of particular points of faith: yet methinks they put a very odd condition, and untoward reſtraint upon this judge, in telling him, (as they certainly uſed to do thoſe whom they would pervert) that he muſt have no diſcourſe, nor read any books, but only on that ſide which they would gain him to; becauſe that is the way to perplex and confound him, ſo that he ſhall never be able to come to a clear judgment and reſolution in the matter. But will any man admit this way of proceeding in a temporal caſe? This is juſt as if in a cauſe of the greateſt conſequence, the counſel on one ſide ſhould go about to perſuade the judge, that it is only fit to hear what he hath to ſay

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in the caſe; that he will open it very plainly, and ſtate the matter in difference ſo clearly and impartially, and bring ſuch ſtrong reaſons and proofs for what he ſays, that he ſhall not need to hear any thing on the other ſide, but may proceed to judgment without any more ado: but if when the matter is thus laid before him ſo plainly, and is even ripe for judgment, he will trouble himſelf needleſly to hear the other ſide; this will caſt them back where they firſt began, and bring the matter to an endleſs wrangling, and ſo confound and puzzle his underſtanding, that he ſhall never be able to paſs any clear judgment in the cauſe.

What think we would a judge ſay to ſuch a bold and ſenſeleſs pleader? The caſe is the ſame, and the abſurdity every whit as groſs and palpable, in preſſing any man to make a judgment in a matter which infinitely more concerns him, upon hearing only the reaſons and arguments on one ſide.

3. Another art which they uſe in making proſelytes, is to poſſeſs them, that there is but one thing that they are mainly concerned to enquire into, and that is this; ſince there is but one true catholick church of CHRIST upon earth, out of which there is no ſalvation to be had; which that true church is? and when they have found that out, that will teach them in a moſt infallible way the true faith and religion, and all things that are neceſſary to be believed or done by them, in order to their ſalvation; ſo that they have nothing to do, but to ſatisfy themſelves in this ſingle enquiry; which is the true catholick church of CHRIST? This is the *unum neceſſarium*, the one thing neceſſary; and when they have found out this, and are ſatisfied about it, they need to enquire no farther, this church will fully inſtruct

ſtruct and ſatisfy them in all other things. And this I cannot deny to be a very artificial way of proceeding, and to ſerve their purpoſe very well; for they have theſe two great advantages by it. SERM. LXI.

1. That it makes the work ſhort, and ſaves them a great deal of labour, by bringing the whole buſineſs, to one ſingle enquiry: and when they have gained this point, that this ſingle queſtion is all that they need to be ſatisfied in; then they have nothing to do, but to ply and puzzle the man with their motives of credibility, and marks of the true church, and to ſhew, as well as they can, how theſe marks agree to their church, and are all to be found in it, and in no other; and to ſet out to the beſt advantage the glorious privileges of their church, the miraculous things that have been and are ſtill daily done in it, and the innumerable multitude of their ſaints and martyrs; and if theſe general things take and ſink into them, their work is in effect done.

2. Another great advantage they have by it, is, that by bringing them to this method, they divert and keep them off from the many objections againſt their church and religion, namely, the errors and corruptions which we charge them withal. For this is the thing they are afraid of, and will by no means be brought to; to vindicate and make good their innovations in faith and practice, ſo plainly in many things contrary to ſcripture, and to the faith and practice of the primitive church; as the doctrines of tranſubſtantiation, of purgatory, the pope's ſupremacy, of the infallibility of their church, of their ſeven ſacraments inſtituted by CHRIST, and of the intention of the prieſt being neceſſary to the validity and virtue of the ſacraments: and then ſeveral of their practices; as of the worſhip of images, of the

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invocation of angels and ſaints, of the ſervice of God and the ſcriptures in an unknown tongue, and the communion in one kind; and ſeveral other things, ſo plainly contrary to the ſcriptures, and the practice and uſage of the primitive church, that almoſt the meaneſt capacity may eaſily be made ſenſible and convinced of it. Theſe are ſore places, which they deſire not to have touched, and therefore they uſe all poſſible artifice to keep men at a diſtance from them; partly becauſe the particular diſcuſſion of them is tedious, and it requires more than ordinary ſkill, to ſay any thing that is tenable for them, and ſo to paint and varniſh them over, as to hide the corruptions and deformities of them; but chiefly becauſe they are conſcious to themſelves, that as in all theſe points they are upon the defenſive, ſo they are alſo upon very great diſadvantages; and therefort to avoid, if it be poſſible, being troubled with them, they have deviſed this ſhorter, and eaſier, and more convenient way of making proſelytes.

Not that they are always able to keep themſelves thus within their trenches; but are ſometimes, whether they will or no, drawn out to encounter ſome of theſe objections: but they rid themſelves of them as ſoon, and as dexterouſly as they can, by telling thoſe that make them, that they will hereafter give them full ſatisfaction to all theſe matters, when they are gotten over the firſt and main enquiry; which is the true church? For if they can keep them to this point, and gain them to it, they can deal with them more eaſily in the reſt: for when they can once ſwallow this principle, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church, and conſequently, as they have told them all along, infallible; this infallibility of the church once entertained will cover a multitude

multitude of particular errors and miſtakes; and will very much help to cure the weakneſs and defects of ſome particular doctrines and practices, and at laſt to ſilence and over-rule all objections againſt them. So that the benefit and advantage of this method is viſibly and at firſt ſight very great; and therefore no wonder they are ſo ſteady and conſtant to it, and do ſo obſtinately inſiſt upon it. But how convenient ſoever it be to them; it is, I am ſure, very unreaſonable in itſelf; and that upon theſe accounts.

1. Becauſe the true church doth not conſtitute and make the true chriſtian faith and doctrine; but it is the true chriſtian faith and doctrine, the profeſſion whereof makes the true church; and therefore in reaſon and order of nature, the firſt enquiry muſt be, what is the true faith and doctrine of CHRIST, which by him was delivered to the apoſtles, and by them publiſhed and made known to the world, and by their writings tranſmitted and conveyed down to us? And this being found, every ſociety of Chriſtians which holds this doctrine, is a true part of the catholick church; and all the Chriſtians throughout the world that agree in this doctrine, are the one true catholick church.

2. The enquiry about the true church can have no iſſue, even according to their own way of proceeding, without a due examination of the particular doctrines and practices of that church, the communion whereof they would perſuade a man to embrace. We will admit at preſent this to be the firſt enquiry; which is the true church? let us now ſee in what way they manage this, to gain men over to their church. They tell them that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church of CHRIST. The truth of this aſſertion we will particularly examine afterwards, when we come to conſider the next ſtep of their method in

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dealing with their converts. At preſent I ſhall only take notice in the general, what way they take to prove this aſſertion; namely, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church; and that is, by the notes and marks of the true church, which they call their motives of credibility; becauſe by theſe they deſign to perſuade them, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church. I ſhall not now reckon up all the notes and marks which they give of the true church; but only obſerve, that one of their principal marks of the true church is this; that the faith and doctrine of it be agreeable to the doctrine of the primitive and apoſtolick church, (i. e.) to the doctrine delivered by our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles: and this Bellarmine makes one of the marks of the true church. And they muſt unavoidably make it ſo; becauſe the true faith and doctrine of CHRIST, is that which indeed conſtitutes the true church. But if this be an eſſential mark of the true church; then no man can poſſibly know the church of Rome to be the true church, till we have examined the particular doctrines and practices of it, and the agreement of them with the primitive doctrine and practice of Chriſtianity; and this neceſſarily draws on and engages them in a diſpute of the particular points and differences betwixt us; which is the very thing they would avoid by this method, and which I have now plainly ſhewed they cannot do; becauſe they cannot poſſibly prove their church to be the true church, without ſhewing the conformity of their doctrines and practices, to the doctrine and practice of the primitive and apoſtolick church; and this will give them work enough, and will, whether they will or no, draw them out of their hold and faſtneſs; which is to amuſe people with a general enquiry, which is

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the true church? without deſcending to the examination of their particular doctrines and practices. But this they muſt of neceſſity come to, before they can prove by the notes and marks of the true church, that theirs is the true church. SERM. LXI.

And this is a demonſtration, that their method of ſatisfaction, as it is unnatural and unreaſonable, ſo it cannot ſerve the purpoſe they aim at by it; which is, to divert men from the examination of the particular points in difference between the church of Rome and us, and to gain them over to them by a wile and trick; becauſe the very method they take to prove themſelves to be the true catholick church, will enforce them to juſtify all their particular doctrines and practices, before they can finiſh this proof.

And here we fix our foot; that the ſingle queſtion and point, upon which they would put the whole iſſue of the matter, cannot poſſibly be brought to any reaſonable iſſue, without a particular diſcuſſion and examination of the points in difference betwixt their church and ours: and when they can make out theſe to be agreeable to the primitive doctrine and practice of the chriſtian church; we have reaſon to be ſatisfied, that the church of Rome is a church, in the communion whereof a man may be ſafe: but till that be made out, they have done nothing to perſuade any man that underſtands himſelf, that it is ſafe, much leſs neceſſary to be of their communion. But if particular points muſt be diſcuſſed and cleared, before a man can be ſatisfied in the enquiry after the true church; then they muſt allow their intended convert to be a judge likewiſe of particular points; and if he be ſufficient for that too, before he comes into their church, I do not ſee of what uſe the infallibility of the church will be to him, when he is in it.

SERMON LXII.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

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The fifth ſermon on this text.

I Have already made a conſiderable progreſs in my diſcourſe upon theſe words, in which I told you, there is an exhortation to "hold faſt the profeſſion "of our faith without wavering:" and an argument or encouragement thereto, becauſe "he is faithful "that promiſed." I am yet upon the firſt of theſe, "the exhortation to "hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith without wavering;" by which I told you the apoſtle doth not intend, that thoſe who are capable of examining the grounds and reaſons of their religion, ſhould not have the liberty to do it; nor that, when upon due enquiry they are, as they very believe, eſtabliſhed in the true faith and religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon that is fairly offered againſt their preſent perſuaſion.

And then I proceed to ſhew poſitively,

Firſt, What it is that we are exhorted to. "hold "faſt," (viz.) "the confeſſion or profeſſion of our "faith;" the ancient chriſtian faith, of which every Chriſtian makes profeſſion in his baptiſm. For it is of that the apoſtle here ſpeaks, as appears plainly by the context.

Secondly,

Secondly, How we are to "hold faſt the profeſ- SERM. LXII.
"ſion of our faith." And of this I gave account in the following particulars.

1. We ſhould "hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith," againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport that confidence.

2. And much more againſt the confidence of men, contrary to plain ſcripture and reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind; of which I gave you particular inſtances.

3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms, in ſome other church and religion. I am now upon the

5. And laſt particular I mentioned, namely, that we are to "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith with-"out wavering," againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to make proſelytes to their party and faction. I have already mentioned ſome of the arts which they uſe, (I mean particularly them of the church of Rome) in making proſelytes to their religion; and I have ſhewn the abſurdity and unreaſonableneſs of them. As,

Firſt, In allowing men to be very competent and ſufficient judges for themſelves, in the choice of their religion; (i. e. which is the true church and religion in which alone ſalvation is to be had;) and yet telling them at the ſame time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular doctrines and points of faith. As for theſe, they muſt rely upon the judgment of an infallible church; and if they do not, they will certainly run into damnable errors and miſtakes.

And

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And they muſt of neceſſity allow them the firſt, a ſufficient ability to judge for themſelves in the choice of their religion: otherwiſe in vain do they offer them arguments to perſuade them to theirs; if they cannot judge of the force of them. But now, after this, to deny them all ability to judge of particular doctrines and points of faith, is a very abſurd and inconſiſtent pretence.

Secondly, Another art they uſe, in order to their making a right choice of their religion, is earneſtly to perſuade them to hear and read only the arguments and books on their ſide: which is juſt as if one ſhould go about to perſuade a judge, in order to the better underſtanding and clearer deciſion of a cauſe, to hear only the counſel on one ſide.

Thirdly, They tell them that the only thing they are to enquire into, is, which is the true church, the one catholick church mentioned in the creed, out of which there is no ſalvation; and when they have found that, they are to rely upon the authority of that church, which is infallible, for all other things. And this method they wiſely take, to avoid particular diſputes about the innovations and errors which we charge them withal. But I have ſhewn at large, that this cannot be the firſt enquiry: becauſe it is not the true church, that makes the true chriſtian faith and doctrine: but the profeſſion of the true chriſtian faith and doctrine, which makes the true church.

Beſides, their way of proving their church to be the only true church, being by the marks and properties of the true church, of which the chief is, the conformity of their doctrines and practices with the primitive and apoſtolical church; this unavoidably draws on an examination of their particular doctrines and practices, whether they be conformable to thoſe

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of the primitive and apoſtolical church, before their great enquiry, which is the true church? can be brought to an iſſue; which it is plain it can never be, without entering into the ocean of particular diſputes, which they deſire above all things to avoid. So that they are never the nearer by this method; they can neither ſhorten their work by it, nor keep off the examination of their particular errors and corruptions; which are a very ſore place, and they cannot endure we ſhould touch it. SERM. LXII.

I ſhall now proceed to diſcover ſome other arts and methods which they uſe in ſeducing people to their church and religion, and ſhall be as brief in them as I can.

Fourthly, They pretend that the Roman church is the catholick church, (i. e.) the viſible ſociety of all Chriſtians, united to the biſhop of Rome, as the ſupreme paſtor and viſible head of CHRIST's church upon earth: from whence it clearly follows, that it is neceſſary to all Chriſtians to join themſelves to the communion of the Roman church; otherwiſe they cannot be members of the catholick church of CHRIST, out of which there is no ſalvation.

We grant the conſequence, that if the Roman church be the catholick church, it is neceſſary to be of that communion; becauſe out of the catholick church there is ordinarily no ſalvation to be had. But how do they prove, that the Roman church is the catholick church? They would fain have us ſo civil, as to take this for granted: becauſe if we do not; they do not well know how to go about to prove it. And indeed, ſome things are obſtinate, and will not be proved without ſo much trouble and difficulty, that it is better to let them alone; and by the confident aſſertion of them, by importunity, and by any other fair

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fair means, to get them believed, without proof of this ſtubborn ſort of propoſitions, which will admit of no proof. This is one, that a part is the whole; or, which is all one, that the Roman church is the catholick church. For that is but a part of the chriſtian church, and not the beſt part neither, but perhaps the very worſt and moſt corrupt of all the reſt, is no difficult matter to prove, and hath been often done. But now to prove the church of Rome to be the catholick church, that is, the whole ſociety of all true Chriſtians in the world, theſe following particulars ought to be clearly ſhewn and made out.

1. A plain conſtitution of our SAVIOUR, whereby St. Peter and his ſucceſſors at Rome are made the ſupreme head and paſtors of the whole chriſtian church. For St. Peter firſt. Can they ſhew any ſuch conſtitution in the goſpel, or can they produce the leaſt proof and evidence out of the hiſtory of the acts and the epiſtles of the apoſtles, that St. Peter was acknowledged for ſuch by the reſt of the apoſtles? Nay, is there not clear evidence there to the contrary, that in the firſt council of the chriſtian church at Jeruſalem, St. James, the biſhop of Jeruſalem was, if not ſuperior, at leaſt equal to him? Does St. Paul acknowledge any ſuperiority of St. Peter over him? Nay, does he not upon ſeveral occaſions declare himſelf equal to the chiefeſt apoſtles, even to St. Peter himſelf? And is this conſiſtent with a plain conſtitution of our LORD's making St. Peter ſupreme head and paſtor of the chriſtian church?

But ſuppoſe this to have been ſo; where doth it appear, by any conſtitution of our SAVIOUR, that this authority was derived to his ſucceſſors? And if it were, why to his ſucceſſors at Rome, rather than at Antioch, where he was firſt, and unqueſtionably biſhop?

biſhop? They muſt acknowledge, that when he was biſhop of Antioch, he was the ſupreme head and paſtor of the whole chriſtian church; and then the ſtile muſt have been, the Antiochan catholick church, as it is now the Roman catholick. But do they find any footſteps of ſuch a ſtile in eccleſiaſtical hiſtory? SERM. LXII.

2. To make good this propoſition, that the Roman church is the catholick church, they are in conſequence obliged to affirm and believe, that the churches of Aſia, which were excommunicated by the biſhops of Rome, for not keeping eaſter as they did; and the churches of Aſia and Africa, which were excommunicated by the ſame biſhop, upon the point of rebaptizing hereticks; that all theſe, by being turned out of the communion of the Roman church, were alſo cut off from the catholick church, and from a poſſibility of ſalvation. This the church of Rome themſelves will not affirm; and yet, if to be caſt out of the communion of the Roman and the catholick church be all one, they muſt affirm it.

3. In conſequence of this propoſition, that the church of Rome is the catholick church, they ought to hold, that all baptiſm out of the communion of their church is void and of none effect. For if it be good; then it makes the perſons baptized, members of the catholick church; and then thoſe that are out of the communion of the Roman church, may be true members of the catholick church; and then the Roman and the catholick church are not all one. But the church of Rome holds the baptiſm of hereticks, and of thoſe that are out of the communion of their church, to be good; which is a demonſtration, that the Roman church neither is the catholick church; nor if ſhe believe conſiſtently, can ſhe think herſelf to be ſo.

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4. In conſequence of this propoſition, all the Chriſtians in the world, which do not yield ſubjection to the biſhop of Rome, and acknowledge his ſupremacy, are no true parts of the catholick church, nor in a poſſibility of ſalvation. And this does not only exclude thoſe of the reformed religion from being members of the catholick church; but the Greeks, and the eaſtern churches, (i. e) four of the five patriarchal churches of the chriſtian world; which taken together, are really greater than thoſe in communion with the church of Rome. And this the church of Rome does affirm, concerning all thoſe churches and Chriſtians, which refuſe ſubjection to the biſhop of Rome, that they are out of the communion of the catholick church, and a capacity of ſalvation. But ſurely it is not poſſible, that the true catholick church of CHRIST can have ſo little charity as this comes to; and to a wiſe man there needs no other demonſtration than this, that the church of Rome is ſo far from being the whole chriſtian church, that 'tis a very arrogant and uncharitable part of it.

5. And laſtly, In conſequence of the truth of this propoſition, and of the importance of it to the ſalvation of ſouls, and to the peace and unity of the chriſtian church, they ought to produce expreſs mention of the Roman catholick church, in the ancient creeds of the chriſtian church. For if this propoſition, that the Roman church is the catholick, be true; it was always ſo, and always of the greateſt importance to the ſalvation of men, and the peace and unity of the chriſtian church: and if it were ſo, and always believed to be ſo, by the chriſtian church, as they pretend; what reaſon can be imagined, why the ancient chriſtian church ſhould never ſay ſo, nor

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put an article of ſuch conſequence and importance in expreſs words in their creeds; nor why they ſhould not have uſed the ſtile of Roman catholick, as familiarly then, as they do now in the Roman church? A plain evidence that this is a new ſtile which they uſe, when they give themſelves the title of the Roman catholick church; and that the ancient chriſtian church knew better, than to call one part of the catholick church, the whole. I am ſure, that Æneas Sylvius (who was afterwards pope Pius the ſecond) ſays, that before the council of Nice, little reſpect was had to the Roman church. But how does this conſiſt with their preſent pretence, that the Roman church is, and always hath been the catholick church; and that the biſhop of Rome is by CHRIST's appointment, the ſupreme paſtor, and viſible head of the whole chriſtian church; Is it poſſible that this ſhould be believed in the chriſtian church before the council of Nice; and yet little reſpect to be had at that time to the Roman church? This indeed was ſaid by Æneas Sylvius, before he ſat in the infallible chair; but is never the leſs true for that.

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Fifthly, the next ſtep of their method is, that the Roman church is infallible; and by this means they have a certain remedy againſt hereſy, and a judge of controverſies, from which there is no appeal, which we want in our church. And this is a glorious privilege indeed, if they could prove that they had it, and that it would be ſo certain a remedy againſt hereſy, and give a final deciſion to all controverſies. But there is not one tittle of all this, of which they are able to give any tenable proof: For,

1. All the pretence for their infallibility relies upon the truth of the former propoſitions, that the church

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church of Rome is the catholick church, and that they ſay is infallible: and I have already ſhewn, that that propoſition is not only deſtitute of any good proof; but is as evidently falſe, as that a part of a thing is the whole.

2. But ſuppoſing it were true, that the Roman church were the catholick church; yet it is neither evident in itſelf, nor can be proved by them, that the catholick church of every age is infallible, in deciding all controverſies of religion. It is granted by all Chriſtians, that our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles were infallible, in the delivery of the chriſtian doctrine, and they proved their infallibility by miracles: and this was neceſſary at firſt for the ſecurity of our faith: but this doctrine being once delivered and tranſmitted down to us in the holy ſcriptures, written by the evangeliſts and apoſtles, who were infallibly aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt; we have now a certain and infallible rule of faith and practice, which, with the aſſiſtance and inſtruction of thoſe guides and paſtors which CHRIST hath appointed in his church, is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary. And as there is no evidence of the continuance of infallibility in the guides and paſtors of the church, in the ages which followed the apoſtles; becauſe miracles are long ſince ceaſed: ſo there is no need of the continuance of it, for the preſervation of the true faith and religion; becauſe GOD hath ſufficiently provided for that, by that infallible rule of faith and manners which he hath left to his church in the holy ſcriptures, which are every way ſufficient and able to make both paſtors and people wiſe unto ſalvation.

3. As for a certain remedy againſt hereſy, it is certain GOD never intended there ſhould be any;

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no more than he hath provided a certain remedy SERM. LXII.
againſt ſin and vice; which ſurely is every whit as contrary to the chriſtian religion, and therefore as fit to be provided againſt, as hereſy: but it is certain in experience, that GOD hath provided no certain and effectual remedy againſt ſin and vice: for which I can give no other reaſon, but that GOD does that which he thinks beſt and fitteſt, and not what we are apt to think to be ſo.

Beſides that infallibility is not a certain remedy againſt hereſy. The apoſtles were certainly infallible; and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguiſh hereſy; which never more abounded than in the apoſtles times. And St. Paul expreſly tells us, 1 Cor. i. 19. "That there muſt be hereſies; that "they which are approved may be made manifeſt." And St. Peter, the 2d epiſtle ii. 1. "That there "ſhould be falſe teachers among Chriſtians, who "ſhould privily bring in damnable hereſies; and "that many ſhould follow their pernicious ways." But now if there muſt be hereſies; either the church muſt not be infallible, or infallibility in the church is no certain remedy againſt them.

I proceed to the next ſtep they make, viz.

Sixthly, that CHRIST hath always a viſible church upon earth; and that they can ſhew a church, which, from the time of CHRIST and his apoſtles, hath always made a viſible profeſſion of the ſame doctrines and practices which are now believed and practiſed in the church of Rome: but that we can ſhew no viſible church, that from the time of CHRIST and his apoſtles hath always oppoſed the church of Rome, in thoſe doctrines and practices which we now revile and find fault with in their church.

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That CHRIST hath always had, and ever ſhall have to the end of the world, a viſible church, profeſſing and practiſing his true faith and religion, is agreed on both ſides: but we ſay that he hath no where promiſed, that this ſhould be free from all errors and corruptions in faith and practice. This the churches planted by the apoſtles themſelves were not, even in their times, and during their abode amongſt them; and yet they were true parts of the chriſtian catholick church. In the following ages, errors and corruptions and ſuperſtitions did by degrees creep in and grow up, in ſeveral parts of the church; as St. Auſtin, and other of the fathers complain of in their times. Since that, ſeveral famous parts of the chriſtian church, both in Aſia and Africa, have not only been greatly corrupted, but have apoſtatized from the faith; ſo that in many places there are hardly any footſteps of Chriſtianity among them. But yet ſtill CHRIST hath had in all theſe ages a viſible church upon earth; though perhaps no part of it at all times free from ſome errors and corruptions; and in ſeveral parts of it, great corruptions both in faith and practice; and in none I think more and longer, than in the church of Rome, for all ſhe boaſts herſelf like old Babylon, Iſa. xlvii. 7. 8. "That ſhe is a lady for ever; and ſays in her heart, "I am, and none elſe beſides me;" and like the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. which ſaid, "I "am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need "of nothing;" when the ſpirit of GOD ſaith, that "ſhe was wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and "blind, and naked; and knew it not."

Thus the church of Rome boaſts; that ſhe hath in all ages been the true viſible church of CHRIST, (and none beſides her) free from all errors in doctrine,

trine, and corruptions in practice; and that from the age of CHRIST and his apoſtles, ſhe hath always profeſſed the ſame doctrine and practices which ſhe does at this day. Can any thing be more ſhameleſs than this? Did they always believe tranſubſtantiation? Let their pope Gelaſius ſpeak for them; who expreſly denies, that in the ſacrament there is any ſubſtantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of CHRIST. Was this always an article of their faith, and neceſſary to be believed by all Chriſtians? Let Scotus, and ſeveral other of their ſchoolmen and learned writers, ſpeak for them. Was purgatory always believed in the Roman church, as it is now defined in the council of Trent? Let ſeveral of their learned men ſpeak. In what father; in what council before that of Trent, do they find CHRIST to have inſtituted juſt ſeven ſacraments, neither more nor leſs? and for practices in their religion, they themſelves will not ſay, that in the ancient chriſtian church the ſcriptures were withheld from the people, and locked up in an unknown tongue; and that the publick ſervice of GOD, the prayers and leſſons were read, and the ſacraments celebrated, in an unknown tongue; and that the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper was given to the people only in one kind. Where do they find in holy ſcripture, or in the doctrine and practice of the ancient chriſtian church, any command or example for the worſhip of images; for the invocation of ſaints and angels and the bleſſed virgin; which do now make a great part of their religion? Nay, is not the doctrine of the ſcriptures, and of the ancient fathers plainly againſt all theſe practices? With what face then can it be ſaid, that the church of Rome hath made a conſtant viſible profeſſion of the ſame faith and

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And whereas they demand of us, to ſhew a viſible church from the time of CHRIST and his apoſtles, that hath always oppoſed the church of Rome, in thoſe points of doctrine and practice which we object to them; what can be more impertinent than this demand? When they know that in all theſe points we charge them with innovations in matters of faith and practice, and ſay that thoſe things came in by degrees, ſeveral ages after the apoſtles time, ſome ſooner, ſome later; as we are able to make good, and have done it. And would they have us ſhew them a viſible church, that oppoſed theſe errors and corruptions in their church, before ever they appeared? This we do not pretend to ſhew. And ſuppoſing they had not been at all oppoſed, when they appeared, nor a long time after, not till the reformation; yet if they be errors and corruptions of the chriſtian doctrine, and contrary to the holy ſcriptures, and to the faith and practice of the primitive church; there is no preſcription againſt truth. It is never too late, for any church to reject thoſe errors and corruptions, and to reform itſelf from them.

The bottom of all this matter is, they would have us to ſhew them a ſociety of Chriſtians, that in all ages hath preſerved itſelf free from all ſuch errors and corruptions, as we charge them withal; or elſe we deny the perpetual viſibility of the catholick church. No ſuch matter. We ſay the church of CHRIST hath always been viſible in every age ſince CHRIST's time; and that the ſeveral ſocieties of Chriſtians, pro-

profeſſing the chriſtian doctrine and laws of CHRIST, have made up the catholick church; ſome parts whereof have in ſeveral ages fallen into great errors and corruptions; and no part of the catholick, into more and greater, than the church of Rome; ſo that it requires the utmoſt of our charity to think that they are a true, though a very unſound and corrupt part of the catholick church of CHRIST. SERM. LXII.

We acknowledge likewiſe, that we were once involved in the like degeneracy; but by the mercy of GOD, and pious care and prudence of thoſe that were in authority, are happily reſcued out of it: and though we were not out of the catholick church before; yet ſince our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, we are in it upon better terms, and are a much ſounder part of it; and I hope by the mercy and goodneſs of GOD, we ſhall for ever continue ſo.

So that to the perpetual viſibility of CHRIST's church, it is not neceſſary, that the whole chriſtian church, or indeed that any part of it ſhould be free from all errors and corruptions. Even the churches planted by the apoſtles in the primitive times were not ſo. St. Paul reproves ſeveral doctrines, and practices in the church of Corinth, and of Coloſſe, and of Galatia; and the ſpirit of GOD, ſeveral things in the ſeven churches of Aſia: and yet all theſe were true parts and members of the catholick church of CHRIST, notwithſtanding theſe faults and errors; becauſe they all agreed in the main and eſſential doctrines of Chriſtianity. And when more and greater corruptions grew upon the church, or any part of it; the greater reaſon and need there was of a reformation. And as every particular perſon hath a right to reform any thing that he finds amiſs in himſelf, ſo far as concerns himſelf; ſo much more every national

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church hath a power within itſelf, to reform itſelf from all errors and corruptions, and by the ſanction of the catholick authority to confirm that reformation; which is our caſe here in England. And whatever part of the church, how great and eminent ſoever, excludes from her communion ſuch a national church, for reforming herſelf from plain errors and corruptions, clearly condemned by the word of GOD, and by the doctrine and practice of the primitive chriſtian church, is undoubtedly guilty of ſchiſm. And this is the truth of the caſe between us and the church of Rome. And no blind talk about a perpetual viſible church can render us guilty of ſchiſm, for making a real reformation; or acquit them of it, for caſting us out of their communion for that cauſe.

Seventhly, and laſtly, (to mention no more) they pretend that we delude the people, by laying too much ſtreſs upon the ſcripture, and making it the only rule of faith and manners: whereas ſcripture and tradition together make up the entire rule of faith; and not ſcripture interpreted by every man's private fancy, but by tradition carefully preſerved in the church. So that it ought to be no wonder, if ſeveral of their doctrines and practices cannot be ſo clearly made out by ſcripture, or perhaps ſeem contrary to it, as it may be expounded by a private ſpirit; but not as interpreted by the tradition of the church, which can only give the true ſenſe of ſcripture. And therefore they are to underſtand, that ſeveral of thoſe doctrines and practices which we object againſt, are moſt clearly proved by the tradition of their church, which is of equal authority with ſcripture.

In this objection of theirs, which they deſign for the cover of all their errors and corruptions, there are ſeveral things diſtinctly to be conſidered, which I ſhall do as briefly as I can. Firſt,

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Firſt, Whereas it is ſuggeſted, that we delude the people, by laying too much ſtreſs upon the ſcriptures, (which certainly we cannot well do, if it be the word of GOD) it ought to be conſidered, whether they do not delude and abuſe them infinitely more, in keeping the ſcriptures from them, and not ſuffer them to ſee that which they cannot deny to be at leaſt a conſiderable part of the rule of chriſtian doctrine and practice. Doth it not by this dealing of theirs appear very ſuſpicious, that they are extremely afraid that the people ſhould examine their doctrine and practice by this rule? For what other reaſon can they have to conceal it from them?

Secondly, Whereas they affirm, that ſcripture alone is not the rule of chriſtian faith and practice, but that ſcripture, and oral tradition preſerved in the church, and delivered down from hand to hand, make up the entire rule; I would fain know whence they learned this new doctrine of the rule of faith. I know that the council of Trent declares it for the rule they intend to proceed upon and make uſe of, for the confirmation and proof of their following determinations and decrees. But did any of the ancient councils of the chriſtian church lay down this rule, and proceed upon it? Did not Conſtantine the emperor, at the opening of the firſt general council, lay the bible before them, as the only rule, according to which they were to proceed; and this with the approbation of all thoſe holy fathers that were aſſembled in that council? And did not following councils proceed upon the ſame rule? Do any of the ancient fathers ever mention any rule of chriſtian faith and practice, beſides the holy ſcriptures, and the ancient creed; which, becauſe it is an abridgment of the neceſſary articles of chriſtian faith contained in the holy ſcriptures, is

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by them frequently called the rule of faith? Do not the ſame fathers frequently and expreſly ſay, that the ſcriptures are a perfect rule, and that all things are plainly contained in them, which concern faith and life; and that whatever cannot be proved by teſtimony of ſcripture, is to be rejected? All this I am ſure I can make good, by innumerable expreſs teſtimonies of the ancient fathers, which are well known to thoſe that are verſed in them. By what authority then hath the council of Trent ſet up this new rule, unknown to the chriſtian church for 1500 years? And who gave them this authority? The plain truth is, the neceſſity of it for the defence of the errors and corruptions which they had embraced, and were reſolved not to part with, forced them to lengthen out the rule; the old rule of the holy ſcriptures being too ſhort for that purpoſe.

Thirdly, Whereas they pretend that holy ſcripture, as expounded by a private ſpirit, may not ſeem ſo favourable to ſome of their doctrines and practices; yet, as interpreted by tradition, which can only give the true ſenſe of ſcripture, it agrees very well with them: I ſuppoſe they mean, that whereas a private ſpirit would be apt to underſtand ſome texts of ſcripture, as if people were to ſearch and read the ſcripture; tradition interprets thoſe texts in a quite other ſenſe, that people are not to be permitted to read the holy ſcriptures. A private ſpirit would be apt to underſtand St. Paul's diſcourſe, in the 14th of the 1ſt to the Corinthians, to be againſt celebrating prayer and the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue, as being contrary to edification, and indeed to common ſenſe, for he ſays, "If one ſhould come, and find "them ſpeaking and praying in an unknown tongue, "will they not ſay, ye are mad?" But now tradi-

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tion, which only knows how to give the true ſenſe, can reconcile this diſcourſe of St. Paul very eaſily with the practice of the church of Rome in this matter. And ſo likewiſe the epiſtle of St. Paul to the Coloſſians, with the worſhip of angels; and the epiſtle to the Hebrews, with offering the propitiatory ſacrifice of CHRIST in the maſs a thouſand times every day. And to give but one inſtance more; whereas a man by his private ſpirit would be very apt to underſtand the ſecond commandment to forbid all worſhip of images; tradition diſcovers the meaning of this commandment to be, that due veneration is to be given to them. So that at this rate of interpreting ſcripture by tradition, it is impoſſible to fix any objection from ſcripture, upon any doctrine or practice which they have a mind to maintain. SERM. LXII.

Fourthly, Whereas they pretend the tradition of their church, delivered from the mouth of CHRIST, or dictated by the holy ſpirit, and brought down to them, and preſerved by continual ſucceſſion in the church, to be of equal authority with the word of GOD; for ſo the council of Trent ſays, "that the "holy ſynod doth receive and venerate theſe tradi-"tions with equal pious affection and reverence, as "they do the written word of GOD:" this we muſt declare againſt as unreaſonable in itſelf, to make tradition, conveyed by word of mouth from one to another, through ſo many ages, and liable to ſo many miſtakes and miſcarriages, to be, at the diſtance of 1500 years, of equal certainty and authority with the holy ſcriptures, carefully preſerved and tranſmitted down to us; becauſe this (as I ſaid before) is to make common rumour and report of equal authority and certainty with a written record. And not only ſo; but hereby they make the ſcriptures an imperfect rule; contrary

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contrary to the declared judgment of the ancient fathers and councils of the chriſtian church; and ſo, in truth, they ſet up a new rule of faith, whereby they change the chriſtian religion. For a new rule of faith and religion makes a new faith and religion. This we charge the church of Rome with, and do challenge them to ſhew this new rule of faith, before the council of Trent; and conſequently where their religion was before that council; to ſhew a religion, conſiſting of all thoſe articles, which are defined by the council of Trent as neceſſary to ſalvation, and eſtabliſhed upon this new rule, profeſſed by any chriſtian church in the world before that time. And as they have pitched upon a new rule of faith; ſo it is eaſy to ſee to what end. For take pope Pius IV. his creed, and we may ſee where the old and new religion parts; even at the end of the twelve articles of the apoſtles creed, which was the ancient chriſtian faith; to which are added in pope Pius his creed twelve articles more, defined in the council of Trent, and ſupported only by tradition. So that as the ſcripture anſwers for the twelve old articles, which are plainly contained there; ſo tradition is to anſwer for the twelve new ones. And therefore the matter was calculated very exactly, when they make tradition juſt of equal authority with the ſcriptures; becauſe as many articles of their faith were to be made good by it, and rely upon it, as thoſe which are proved by the authority of Scripture. But that tradition is of equal authority with the ſcriptures, we have nothing in the whole world for it, but the bare aſſertion of the council of Trent.

I ſhould now have added ſome other conſiderations, tending to confirm and eſtabliſh us in our religion, againſt the pretences and inſinuations of ſeducing ſpirits: but I ſhall proceed no farther at preſent.

SERMON LXIII.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

SERM. LXIII. The ſixth ſermon on this text.

THESE words contain an exhortation "to hold "faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wa- "vering," and an argument or encouragement thereto, becauſe "he is faithful that promiſed." By the exhortation "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith without wavering," is not meant, that thoſe who are capable of examining the grounds and reaſons of their religion ſhould blindly hold it faſt againſt the beſt reaſons that can be offered; becauſe upon theſe terms, every man muſt continue in the religion in which he happens to be fixt by education, or an ill choice, be his religion true or falſe, without examining and looking into it, whether it be right or wrong; for till a man examines, every man thinks his religion right. That which the apoſtle here exhorts Chriſtians to hold faſt is the ancient faith, of which all Chriſtians make a ſolemn profeſſion in their baptiſm; as plainly appears from the context. And this "profeſſion of our faith," we are to hold in the following inſtances, which I ſhall but briefly mention, without enlarging upon them.

1. We

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1. We are "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith "againſt the confidence of men, without ſcripture or reaſon to ſupport that confidence.

2. And much more, againſt the confidence of men contrary to plain ſcripture and reaſon, and to the common ſenſe of mankind.

3. Againſt all the temptations and terrors of the world, againſt the temptations of faſhion and example, and of worldly intereſt and advantage and againſt all terrors and ſufferings and perſecution.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to heaven upon eaſier terms than the goſpel has propoſed in ſome other church and religion.

Laſtly, we are "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith without wavering," againſt all the cunning arts and inſinuations of buſy and diſputing men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to make proſelytes to their party and faction.

But without entring into theſe particulars, I ſhall in order to our eſtabliſhment in the reformed religion which we profeſs, in oppoſition to the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, apply myſelf at this time, to make a ſhort compariſon betwixt the religion which we profeſs, and that of the church of Rome, that we may diſcern on which ſide the advantage of truth lyes; and in making this compariſon, I ſhall inſiſt upon three things which will bring the matter to an iſſue, and are, I think, ſufficient to determine every ſober and conſiderate man, which of theſe he ought in reaſon, and with regard to the ſafety of his ſoul, to embrace; and they are theſe.

I. That we govern our belief and practice in matters of religion, by the true ancient rule of chriſtianity, the word of GOD contained in the holy ſcriptures:

tures: but the church of Rome, for the maintenance of their errors and corruptions, have been forced to deviſe a new rule, never owned by the primitive church, nor by the ancient fathers and councils of it. SERM. LXIII.

II. That the doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome, are either contrary to this rule, or deſtitute of the warrant and authority of it, and are plain additions to the ancient chriſtianity, and corruptions of it.

III. That our religion hath many clear advantages of that of the church of Rome, not only very conſiderable in themſelves, but very obvious and diſcernable to an ordinary capacity, upon the firſt propoſal of them. I ſhall be as brief in theſe as I can.

I. That we govern our belief and practice in matters of religion, by the true ancient rule of chriſtianity, the word of GOD contained in the holy ſcriptures: but the church of Rome, for the maintaining of their errors and corruptions, have been forced to deviſe a new rule, never owned by the primitive church, nor by the ancient councils and fathers of it; that is, they have joined with the word of GOD, contained in the holy ſcriptures, the unwritten traditions of their church, concerning ſeveral points of their faith and practice, which they acknowledge cannot be proved from ſcripture, and theſe they call the unwritten word of GOD; and the council of Trent hath decreed them to be of equal authority with the holy ſcriptures, and that they do receive and venerate them with the ſame pious affection and reverence; and all this, contrary to the expreſs declaration and unanimous conſent of all the ancient councils and fathers of the chriſtian church, (as I have already ſhewn;) and this never declar'd to be a point of faith, till it was deceed, not much above a hun-

SERM. LXIII. a hundred years ago, in the council of Trent. And this ſurely, if any thing, is a matter of great conſequence, to preſume to alter the ancient rule of chriſtian doctrine and practice, and to enlarge it, and add to it, at their pleaſure. But the church of Rome having made ſo great a change in the doctrine and practice of chriſtianity, it became conſequently neceſſary to make a change of the rule: and therefore with great reaſon did the council of Trent take this into conſideration in the firſt place, and put it in the front of their decrees, becauſe it was to be the foundation and main proof of the following definitions of faith, and decrees of practice, for which, without this new rule, there had been no colour.

II. The doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us, and the church of Rome, are either contrary to the true rule, or diſtitute of the warrant and authority of it, and plain additions to the ancient chriſtianity, and corruptions of it. The truth of this will beſt appear, by inſtancing in ſome of the principal doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us.

As for their two great fundamental doctrines, of the ſupremacy of the biſhop of Rome over all the Chriſtians in the world, and the infallibility of their church, there is not one word in ſcripture concerning theſe privileges; nay it is little leſs than a demonſtration that they have no ſuch privileges, that St. Paul in a long epiſtle to the church of Rome takes no notice of them, that the church of Rome either then was, or was to be ſoon after, the mother and miſtreſs of all churches, which is now grown to be an article of faith in the church of Rome; and yet it is hardly to be imagined, that he could have omitted to take notice of ſuch remarkable privileges of their biſhops and church, above any in the world, had he known they had belonged to them.

them. So that in all probability he was ignorant of those mighty prerogatives of the church of Rome; otherwiſe it cannot be, but that he would have written with more difference and ſubmiſſion to this ſeat of infallibility, and center of unity; he would certainly have paid a greater reſpect to this mother and miſtreſs of all churches, where the head of the church, and vicar of CHRIST either was already ſeated, or by the appointment of CHRIST was deſigned for ever to fix his throne and eſtabliſh his reſidence; but there is not one word, or the leaſt intimation of any ſuch thing throughout this whole epiſtle, nor in any other part of the new teſtament. SERM. LXIII.

Beſides that both theſe pretended privileges are omitted, by plain fact and evidence of things themſelves; their ſupremacy, in that the far greateſt part of the chriſtian church, neither is at this day, nor can be ſhewn by the records of any age, ever to have been ſubject to the biſhop of Rome, or to have acknowledged his authority and juriſdiction over them: and the infallibility of the pope, whether with or without a general council, about which they ſtill differ, though infallibility was deviſed on purpoſe, to determine all differences; I ſay, this infallibility, wherever it is pretended to be, is plainly confuted by the contradictory definitions of ſeveral popes and councils; for if they have contradicted one another, as is plain, beyond all contradiction, in ſeveral inſtances, then there muſt of neceſſity be an error on one ſide; and there can be no ſo certain demonſtration, that any one is infallible, as evident error and miſtake is of the contrary.

Next, their concealing both the rule of religion, and the practice of it in the worſhip and ſervice of GOD, from the people, in an unknown tongue; and

SERM. LXIII. and their adminiſtring the communion to the people in one kind only, contrary to clear ſcripture, and the plain inſtitution of our bleſſed SAVIOUR. And then their worſhip of images, and invocation of angels and ſaints, and the bleſſed virgin, in the ſame ſolemn manner, and for the ſame bleſſings and benefits which we beg of GOD himſelf; contrary to the expreſs word of GOD, which commands us "to "worſhip the LORD our GOD, and to ſerve him "only; "and which declares, that as there is but "one GOD, "ſo there is but "one mediator between "GOD and man, CHRIST JESUS;" but one mediator, not only of redemption, but of interceſſion too; for the apoſtle there ſpeaks of a mediator of interceſſion, by whom only we are to offer up our prayers, which are to be put up to GOD only; and which expreſly forbids men to worſhip any image or likeneſs. And the learned men of their own church acknowledge, that there is neither precept nor example for theſe practices in ſcripture, and that they were not uſed in the chriſtian church for ſeveral ages; and this acknowledgment we think very conſiderable, ſince ſo great a part of their religion, eſpecially as it is practiſed among the people, is contained in theſe points. For the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue, and withholding the ſcriptures from the people, they do not pretend ſo much as one teſtimony of any father for the firſt 600 years; and nothing certainly can be more unreaſonable in itſelf, than to deny people the beſt means of knowing the will of GOD, and not to permit them to underſtand what is done in the publick worſhip of GOD, and what prayers are put up to him in the church.

The two great doctrines of tranſubſtantiation and purgatory are acknowledged by many of their own learned

learned writers, to have no certain foundation in ſcripture: and that there are ſeven ſacraments of the chriſtian religion, though it be now made an article of faith by the council of Trent, is a thing which cannot be ſhewn in any council or father far above a thouſand years after CHRIST. And we find no mention of this number of the ſacraments, till the age of Peter Lombard the father of the ſcoolmen. SERM. LXIII.

That the church of Rome is the mother and miſtreſs of all churches, though that alſo be one of the new articles of pope Pius IV. his creed, which their prieſts are by a ſolemn oath obliged to believe and teach; yet it is moſt evidently falſe. That ſhe is not the mother of all churches is plain becauſe Jeruſalem was certainly ſo; for there certainly was the firſt chriſtian church, and from thence all the chriſtian churches in the world derive themſelves: that ſhe is not, (though ſhe fain would be) the miſtreſs of all churches, is as evident, becauſe the greateſt part of the chriſtian church does at this day, and always did, deny that ſhe hath any authority or ſupremacy over them. Now theſe are the principal matters in difference betwixt us; and if theſe points, and a few more, be pared off from popery, that which remains of their religion, is the ſame with ours, that is, the true ancient chriſtianity.

III. I ſhall ſhew that our religion hath many clear advantages of theirs, not only very conſiderable in themſelves, but very obvious and diſcernible to an ordinary capacity, upon the very firſt propoſal of them; as,

1. That our religion agrees perfectly with the ſcriptures, and all points both of our belief and practice, eſteemed by us as neceſſary to ſalvation, are there contained, even our enemies themſelves being judges.

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We "worſhip the LORD our GOD, and him only" do we "ſerve." We do not fall down before images and worſhip them: we addreſs all prayers to GOD alone, by the only mediation and interceſſion of his ſon JESUS CHRIST, as he himſelf hath given us commandment, and as St. Paul doth plainly direct, giving us this plain and ſubſtantial reaſon for it, becauſe as there is but "one GOD," ſo there is "but one mediator between GOD and man, the man "CHRIST JESUS."

The publick worſhip and ſervice of GOD is perform'd by us in a language which we underſtand, according to St. Paul's expreſs order and direction, and the univerſal practice of the ancient church, and the nature and reaſon of the thing itſelf. We adminiſter the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper in both kinds, according to our SAVIOUR's example and plain inſtitution, and the continual practice of all the chriſtian churches in the world, for above a thouſand years.

2. We believe nothing as neceſſary to ſalvation, but what hath been owned in all ages to be the chriſtian doctrine, and is acknowledged ſo to be by the church of Rome itſelf; and we receive the whole faith of the primitive chriſtian church, (viz.) whatever is contained in the apoſtles creed, and in the explications of that in the creeds of the four firſt general councils. By which it plainly appears, that all the points of faith in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome are mere innovations and plain additions to the ancient chriſtian faith: but all that we believe, is acknowledged by them to be undoubtedly the ancient chriſtian faith.

3. There is nothing wanting in our church and religion, whether in matter of faith or practice, which either

either the ſcripture makes neceſſary to ſallvation, or was ſo eſteemed by the chriſtian church for the firſt five hundred years; and we truſt, that what was ſufficient for the ſalvation of Chriſtians in the beſt ages of chriſtianity, for five hundred years together, may be ſo ſtill; and we are very well content to venture our ſalvation upon the ſame terms that they did. SERM. LXIII.

4. Our religion is not only free from all idolatrous worſhip, but even from all ſuſpicion and probable charge of any ſuch thing: but this the church of Rome is not, as is acknowledged by her moſt learned champions, and as no man of ingenuity can deny; and the reaſon which the learned men give, why the worſhip of images and the invocation of angels and ſaints departed were not practiſed in the primitive church, for the firſt three hundred years, is a plain acknowledgment that theſe practices are very liable to the ſuſpicion of idolatry; for they ſay that the Chriſtians did then forbear thoſe practices, becauſe they ſeemed to come too near to the pagan idolatry, and leſt the heathen ſhould have taken occaſion to have juſtified themſelves, if theſe things had been practiſed among Chriſtians; and they cannot now be ignorant, what ſcandal they give by theſe practices both to the Jews and Turks, and how much they alienate them from chriſtianity by this ſcandal; nor can they chuſe but be ſenſible, upon how great diſadvantage they are in defending theſe practices from the charge of idolatry, and that by all their blind diſtinctions, with which they raiſe ſuch a cloud and duſt, they can hardly make any plauſible and tolerable defence of themſelves from this charge; inſomuch that to ſecure their own people from diſcerning their guilt in this matter, they have been put upon that ſhameful ſhift of leaving out the ſecond commandment in

SERM. LXIII. their common catechiſms and manuals, leſt the people ſeeing ſo plain a law of GOD, againſt ſo common a practice of their church, ſhould upon that diſcovery have broken off from them.

5. Nor is our religion incumbered with ſuch an endleſs number of ſuperſtitious and troubleſome obſervances, as theirs infinitely is, even beyond the number of the Jewiſh ceremonies, to the great burden and ſcandal of the chriſtian religion, and the diverting of mens minds from the ſpiritual part of religion, and the more weighty and neceſſary duties of the chriſtian life; ſo that, in truth, a devout paſtor is ſo taken up with the external rites and little obſervances of his religion, that he hath little or no time to make himſelf a good man, and to cultivate and improve his mind in true piety and virtue.

6. Our religion is evidently more charitable to all Chriſtians that differ from us, and particularly to them, who, by their uncharitableneſs to us, have done as much as is poſſible to diſcharge and damp our charity towards them. And charity, as it is one of the moſt eſſential marks of a true Chriſtian, ſo it is likewiſe the beſt mark and ornament of a true church; and of all things that can be thought of, methinks the want of charity in any church ſhould be a motive to no man to fall in love with it, and to be fond of its communion.

7. Our religion doth not claſh and interfere with any of the great moral duties, to which all mankind ſtand obliged by the law and light of nature; as fidelity, mercy, and truth. We do not teach men to break faith with heretics or infidels; nor to deſtroy and extirpate thoſe who differ from us, with fire and ſword: no ſuch thing as equivocation or mental reſervation, or any other artificial way of falſhood, is either

either taught or maintained, either by the doctrine or by the catechiſms of our church. SERM. LXIII.

8. Our religion and all the doctrines of it are perfectly conſiſtent with the peace of civil government, and the welfare of human ſociety. We neither exempt the clergy from ſubjection to the civil powers; nor abſolve ſubjects upon any pretence whatſoever from allegiance to their princes; both which points, the neceſſity of the one, and the lawfulneſs of the other, have been taught and ſtiffly maintained in the church of Rome, not only by private doctors, but by popes and general councils.

9. The doctrines of our religion are perfectly free from all ſuſpicion of a worldly intereſt and deſign; whereas the greateſt part of the erroneous doctrines, with which we charge the church of Rome, are plainly calculated to promote the end of worldly greatneſs and dominion.

The pope's kingdom is plainly of this world; and the doctrines and maxims of it, like ſo many ſervants, are ready upon all occaſions to fight for him. For moſt of them do plainly tend, either to the eſtabliſhment and enlargement of his authority: or to the magnifying of the prieſts, and the giving them a perfect power over the conſciences of the people, and the keeping them in a ſlaviſh ſubjection and blind obedience to them. And to this purpoſe do plainly tend the doctrines of exempting the clergy from the ſecular power and juriſdiction; the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; for it muſt needs make the prieſt a great man in the opinion of the people, to believe that he can make GOD, as they love to expreſs it, without all reaſon and reverence. Of the like tendency is the communicating of the laity only in one kind, thereby making it the ſole privilege of the prieſt to

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receive the ſacrament in both: the withholding the ſcripture from the people, and celebrating the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue: the doctrine of an implicit faith, and abſolute reſignation of their judgments to their teachers: theſe do all directly tend to keep the people in ignorance, and to bring them to a blind obedience to the dictates of their teachers. So likewiſe the neceſſity of the intention of the prieſt, to the ſaving virtue and efficacy of the ſacraments; by which doctrine, the people do upon the matter depend as much upon the good will of the prieſt, as upon the mercy of GOD for their ſalvation. But above all, their doctrine of the neceſſity of auricular and private confeſſion of all mortal ſins committed after baptiſm, with all the circumſtances of them to the prieſt; and this not only for the eaſe and direction of their conſciences, but as a neceſſary condition of having their ſins pardoned and forgiven by GOD: by which means they make themſelves maſters of all the ſecrets of the people, and keep them in awe by the knowledge of their faults, *ſcire volunt ſecreta domus atque inde timeri.* Or elſe their doctrines tend to filthy lucre, and the enriching of their church. As their doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, and their prayers and maſſes for the dead, and many more doctrines and practices of the like kind plainly do.

10. Our religion is free from all diſingenuous and diſhoneſt arts of maintaining and ſupporting itſelf. Such are clipping of ancient authors, nay and even the authors and writers of their own church, when they ſpeak too freely of any point; as may be ſeen in their *indices expurgatorii* which much againſt their wills have been brought to light. To which I only add theſe three groſs forgeries, which lye all at their doors, and they cannot deny them to be ſo.

1. The

1. The pretended canon of the council of Nice in the caſe of appeals, between the church of Rome and the African church; upon which they inſiſted a great while very confidently, till at laſt they were convinced by authentick copies of the canons of that council. SERM. LXIII.

2. Conſtantine's donation to the pope, which they kept a great ſtir with, till the forgery of it was diſcovered.

3. The decretal epiſtles of the ancient popes; a large volume of forgeries compiled by Iſidore Mercator, to countenance the uſurpations of the biſhop of Rome, and of which the church of Rome made a great uſe for ſeveral ages, and pertinaciouſly defended the authority of them, till the learned men of their own church have at laſt been forced for very ſhame to diſclaim them, and to confeſs the impoſture of them. A like inſtance whereto is not I hope to be ſhewn in any chriſtian church. This is that which St. Paul calls κυβεία, "the ſleight of men," ſuch as gameſters uſe at dice; for to alledge falſe and forged authors in this caſe, is to play with falſe dice, when the ſalvation of mens ſouls lies at ſtake.

11. Our religion has this mighty advantage, that it doth not decline trial and examination, which to any man of ingenuity muſt needs appear a very good ſign of an honeſt cauſe; but if any church be ſhy of having her religion examined, and her doctrines and practices brought into the open light, this gives juſt ground of ſuſpicion that ſhe hath ſome diſtruſt of them; for truth doth not ſeek corners, nor ſhun the light. Our SAVIOUR hath told us who they are that "love darkneſs rather than light, viz. they whoſe "deeds are evil; for every one," ſaith he, "that "doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to "the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved and

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" made manifeſt." There needs no more to render a religion ſuſpected to a wiſe man, than to ſee thoſe who profeſs it, and make ſuch proud boaſts of the truth and goodneſs of it, ſo fearful that it ſhould be examined and looked into, and that their people ſhould take the liberty to hear and read what can be ſaid againſt it.

12. We perſuade men to our religion by human and chriſtian ways, ſuch as our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles uſed, by urging men with the authority of GOD, and with arguments fetcht from another world, the promiſe of eternal life and happineſs, and the threatning of eternal death and miſery, which are the proper arguments of religion, and which alone are fitted to work upon the minds and conſciences of men. The terror and torture of death may make men hypocrites, and awe them to profeſs with their mouths what they do not believe in their hearts; but this is no proper means of converting the ſoul, and convincing the minds and conſciences of men; and theſe violent and cruel ways cannot be denied to have been practiſed in the church of Rome, and ſet on foot by the authority of councils, and greatly countenanced and encouraged by popes themſelves; witneſs the many croiſades for the extirpation of hereticks, the ſtanding cruelties of their inquiſition, their occaſional maſſacres and perſecutions, of which we have freſh inſtances in every age.

But theſe methods of converſion are a certain ſign that they either diſtruſt the truth and goodneſs of their cauſe, or elſe that they think truth and the arguments for it are of no force, when dragoons are their *ratio ultima*, the laſt reaſon which their cauſe relies upon, and the beſt and moſt effectual it can afford.

Again,

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Again, we hold no doctrines in defiance of the ſenſes of all mankind; ſuch as is that of tranſubſtantiation, which is now declared in the church of Rome to be a neceſſary article of faith, ſo that a man cannot be of that religion, unleſs he will renounce his ſenſes, and believe againſt the clear verdict of them in a plain ſenſible matter: but after this, I do not underſtand how a man can believe any thing, becauſe by this very thing he deſtroys and takes away the foundation of all certainty. If any man forbid me to believe what I ſee, I forbid him to believe any thing upon better and ſurer evidence. St. Paul ſaith, that "faith cometh by hearing:" but if I cannot rely upon the certainty of ſenſe, then the means whereby faith is conveyed is uncertain; and we may ſay as St. Paul doth in another caſe, "then is our preach-"ing vain, and your faith alſo is vain."

Laſtly (to mention no more particulars) as to ſeveral things uſed and practiſed in the church of Rome, we are on much the ſafer ſide, if we ſhould happen to be miſtaken about them, than they are, if they ſhould be miſtaken: for it is certainly lawful to read the ſcriptures, and lawful to permit to the people the uſe of the ſcriptures in a known tongue; otherwiſe we muſt condemn the apoſtles and the primitive church for allowing this liberty. It is certainly lawful to have the publick prayers and ſervice of GOD celebrated in a language which all that join in it can underſtand. It is certainly lawful to adminiſter the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper to the people in both kinds; otherwiſe the chriſtian church would not have done it for a thouſand years. It is certainly lawful, not to worſhip images, not to pray to angels, or ſaints, or the bleſſed virgin; otherwiſe the primitive church would not have forborn theſe practices for three

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three hundred years, as is acknowledged by thoſe of the church of Rome.

Suppoſe a man ſhould pray to GOD only, and offer up all his prayers to him only by JESUS CHRIST, without making mention of any other mediator or interceſſor with GOD for us, relying herein upon what the apoſtle ſays concerning our high-prieſt, JESUS the Son of GOD, Heb. vii. 25. a That he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt, "who come unto GOD by him," (i. e.) by his mediation and interceſſion, "ſince he ever liveth to "make interceſſion for them;" might not a man reaſonably hope to obtain of GOD all the bleſſings he ſtands in need of, by addreſſing himſelf only to him, in the name and by the interceſſion of that "one "mediator between GOD and man, the man CHRIST "JESUS?" Nay, why may not a man reaſonably think, that this is both a ſhorter and more effectual way to obtain our requeſts, than by turning ourſelves to the angels and ſaints, and importuning them to ſolicit GOD for us; eſpecially if we ſhould order the matter ſo, as to make ten times more frequent addreſſes to theſe, than we do to GOD and our bleſſed SAVIOUR, and in compariſon of the other, to neglect theſe. We cannot certainly think any more able to help us and do us good, than the great GOD of heaven and earth, "the GOD" (as the Pſalmiſt ſtyles him) "that heareth prayers," and therefore "unto him ſhould all fleſh come." We cannot certainly think any interceſſor ſo powerful and prevalent with GOD, as his only and dearly beloved Son, offering up our prayers to GOD in heaven, by virtue of that moſt acceptable and invaluable ſacrifice, which he offered to him on earth. We cannot ſurely think, that there is ſo much goodneſs any where

as

is in GOD; that in any of the angels or ſaints, or even in the bleſſed mother of our LORD, there is more mercy and compaſſion for ſinners, and a tenderer ſenſe of our infirmities, than in the Son of GOD, who "is "at the right hand of his Father, to appear in the "preſence of GOD for us." We are ſure that GOD always hears the petitions which we put up to him; and ſo does the Son of GOD, by whom we put them up to the Father, becauſe he alſo is GOD bleſſed for evermore. But we are not ſure that the angels and ſaints hear our prayers, becauſe we are ſure that they are neither omniſcient nor omnipreſent, and we are not ſure, nor probably certain, that our prayers are made known to them any other way, there being no revelation of GOD to that purpoſe. We are ſure that GOD hath declared himſelf to be a jealous GOD, and that he will not give his honour to another; and we are not ſure but that prayer is part of the honour which is due to GOD alone; and if it were not, we can hardly think but that GOD ſhould be ſo far from being pleaſed, with our making ſo frequent uſe of thoſe other mediators and interceſſors, and from granting our deſires the ſooner upon that account, that on the contrary we have reaſon to think, he ſhould be highly offended, when he himſelf is ready to receive all our petitions, and hath appointed a great mediator to that purpoſe, to ſee more addreſſes made to, and by the angels and ſaints and bleſſed virgin, than to himſelf by his bleſſed Son; and to ſee the worſhip of himſelf almoſt joſtled out, by the devotion of people to ſaints and angels, and the bleſſed mother of our LORD; a thing which he never commanded, and which, ſo far as appears by ſcripture, never came into his mind. I have been the longer upon this matter, to ſhew how unreaſonable and needleſs at the beſt, SERM. LXIII.

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beſt, this more than half part of the religion of the church of Rome is; and how ſafely it may be let alone.

But now on the other hand, if they be miſtaken in theſe things, as we can demonſtrate from ſcripture they are, the danger is infinitely great on that ſide; for then they oppoſe an inſtitution of CHRIST, who appointed the ſacrament to be received in both kinds; and they involve themſelves in a great danger of the guilt of idolatry, and our common chriſtianity in the ſcandal and reproach of it; and this without any neceſſity, ſince "GOD hath required none of theſe things "at our hands;" and after all the buſtle which hath been made about them, the utmoſt they pretend (which yet they are not able to make good) is, that theſe things may lawfully be done; and at the ſame time they cannot deny but that if the church had not enjoined them, they might lawfully be let alone. And can any thing be more unreaſonable, than ſo pertinaciouſly to inſiſt upon things ſo hard, I may ſay impoſſible to be defended or excuſed, and which by their own acknowledgment are of no great weight and neceſſity; in which we are certainly ſafe in not doing them, if they ſhould prove lawful; but if they do not prove ſo, they are in a moſt dangerous condition; ſo that here is certain ſafety on the one hand, and the danger of damnation on the other; which is as great odds as is poſſible?

And they muſt not tell us that they are in no danger, becauſe they are infallible, and cannot be miſtaken; they muſt prove that point a great deal better than they have yet done, before it can ſignify any thing either to our ſatisfaction or their ſafety.

I might have inſiſted more largely upon each of theſe particulars, any one of which is of weight to incline

incline a man to that religion, which hath ſuch an advantage on its ſide; but all of them together make ſo powerful an argument to an unprejudiced perſon, as muſt almoſt irreſiſtibly determine his choice; for moſt of the particulars are ſo evident, that they cannot upon the very mention and propoſal of them, be denied to be clear advantages on our ſide. SERM. LXIII.

And now, to uſe the words of St. Peter, "I teſtify unto you, that this is the true grace of God "wherein you ſtand," that the reformed religion which we profeſs, and which by the goodneſs of God is by law eſtabliſhed in this nation, is the true ancient chriſtianity, "the faith," which was "at firſt "delivered to the ſaints," and which is conveyed down to us in the writings of the apoſtles, and the evangeliſts of our LORD and SAVIOUR. "Remember therefore how ye have received and heard; "and hold faſt; for he is faithful that hath promiſed," which is the ſecond part of the text; the encouragement which the apoſtle gives us "to hold faſt the "profeſſion of our faith without wavering; he is "faithful that hath promiſed" to give us "his holy "Spirit to lead us into all truth, to eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen "and ſettle us" in the profeſſion of it, to ſupport and comfort us under all trials and temptations, and "to ſeal us up to the day of redemption; and he is "faithful that hath promiſed" to reward our conſtancy and fidelity to him and his truth, with "a "crown of everlaſting life and glory. Wherefore "my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt and unmoveable," and "always abounding in the work of the "LORD, foraſmuch as you know that your labour "ſhall not be in vain in the LORD; for he is faithful that hath promiſed;" and "let us provoke one "another to charity and good works," which are the great

great ornament and glory of any religion, and "ſo "much the more, becauſe the day approacheth in "which GOD will judge the" belief and lives "of "men by JESUS CHRIST," not according to the imperious and uncharitable dictates of any church, but "according to the goſpel of his Son; to whom "with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all honour "and glory now and for ever."

Now the GOD of peace which brought again from the dead the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work; working in you that which is pleaſing in his ſight. And the peace of GOD which paſſeth all underſtanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of GOD, and of his Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

SERMON LXIV.

The Chriſtian Life, a Life of Faith.

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2 Cor. V. 7.

For we walk by faith, not by ſight.

SERM. LXIV. IN the latter part of the former chapter, the apoſtle declares what it was that was the great ſupport of Chriſtians, under the perſecutions and ſufferings which befel them, viz. the aſſurance of a bleſſed reſurrection to another life, verſe 14. "Know-

"ing

"ing that he which raiſed up the LORD JESUS, SERM.
"ſhall raiſe up us alſo by JESUS; for which cauſe," LXIV.
ſaith he, verſe 16. "we faint not; but though our
"outward man periſh, our inward man is renewed
"day by day;" that is, though our bodies, by reaſon of the hardſhips and ſufferings which we undergo, are continually decaying and declining; yet our minds grow every day more healthful and vigorous, and gain new ſtrength and reſolution, by contemplating the glory and reward of another world, and "as it were feeding upon them by faith; "for our "light affliction which is but for a moment, work-"eth for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight "of glory, whilſt we look not at the things which "are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen."

And he reſumes the ſame argument again at the beginning of this chapter; for we know, that if our "earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we "have a building of GOD, a houſe not made with "hands, eternal in the heavens;" that is, we are firmly perſuaded, that when we die, we ſhall but exchange theſe earthly and periſhing bodies, theſe houſes of clay, for a heavenly manſion, which will never decay nor come to ruin: from whence he concludes, verſe 6. "Therefore we are always confi-"dent," θαῤῥοῦντες δὲ πάντοτε, therefore whatever happens to us, we are always of good courage, and ſee no reaſon to be afraid of death; "knowing that "whilſt we are at home in the body, we are abſent "from the LORD;" that is ſince our continuance in the body is to our diſadvantage, and while we live, we are abſent from our happineſs; and when we die, we ſhall then enter upon the poſſeſſion of it. That which gives us this confidence and good courage is our faith; for though we be not actually poſſeſt of this

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this happineſs, which we ſpeak of, yet we have a firm perſuaſion of the reality of it, which is enough to ſupport our ſpirits, and keep up our courage under all afflictions and adverſities whatſoever, verſe 7; "for we walk by faith, not by ſight."

Theſe words come in by way of parentheſis, in which the apoſtle declares in general, what is the ſwaying and governing principle of a chriſtian life; not only in caſe of perſecution and affliction, but under all events, and in every condition of human life, and that is faith; in oppoſition to ſight and preſent enjoyment: "we walk by faith, and not by ſight." "We walk by faith;" whatever principle ſways and governs a man's life and actions, he is ſaid to walk and live by it. And as here a Chriſtian is ſaid "to "walk by faith," ſo elſewhere "the juſt" is ſaid to "live by faith." Faith is the principle which animates all his reſolutions and actions.

And "not by ſight." The word is, εἴδους, which ſignifies the thing itſelf in preſent view and poſſeſſion, in oppoſition to a firm perſuaſion of things future and inviſible. Sight is the thing in hand, and faith the thing only in hope and expectation. Sight is a clear view and apprehenſion of things preſent and near to us; faith an obſcure diſcovery and apprehenſion of things at a diſtance: ſo the apoſtle tells us, 2 Cor. xiii. 12. "Now we ſee through a glaſs darkly;" this is faith: "but then face to face," this is preſent ſight, as one man ſees another face to face; and thus likewiſe the ſame apoſtle diſtinguiſheth betwixt hope and ſight, Rom. viii. 24, 25. "Hope that is ſeen, "is not hope; for what a man ſees, why doth he "yet hope for it? but if we hope for that which "we ſee not, then do we with patience wait for it." Sight is poſſeſſion and enjoyment; faith is the firm perſuaſion

perſuaſion and expectation of a thing; and this the apoſtle tells us was the governing principle of a Chriſtian's life, "for we walk by faith, and not by ſight;" from which words I ſhall obſerve theſe three things. SERM. LXIV.

I. That faith is the governing principle, and that which bears the great ſway in the life and actions of a Chriſtian; "we walk by faith," that is, we order and govern our lives in the power and virtue of this principle.

II. Faith is a degree of aſſent inferior to that of ſenſe. This is ſufficiently intimated in the oppoſition betwixt faith and ſight. He had ſaid before, that "whilſt we are at home in the body, we are abſent "from the LORD;" and gives this as a reaſon and proof of our abſence from the LORD, "for we walk "by faith, and not by ſight;" that is, while we are in the body, we do not ſee and enjoy, but believe and expect; if we were preſent with the LORD, then faith would ceaſe, and be turned into ſight; but though we have not that aſſurance of another world, which we ſhall have when we come to ſee and enjoy theſe things, yet we are firmly perſuaded of them.

III. Notwithſtanding faith be an inferior degree of aſſurance, yet 'tis a principle of ſufficient power to govern our lives; "we walk by faith;" it is ſuch an aſſurance as hath an influence upon our lives.

I. That faith is the governing principle, and that which bears the great ſway in the life and actions of a Chriſtian. "We walk by faith;" that is, we order and govern our lives in the power and virtue of this principle. A Chriſtian's life conſiſts in obedience to the will of GOD; that is, in a readineſs to do what he commands, and in a willingneſs to ſuffer what he calls us to; and the great arguments and encourage-

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ments hereto, are ſuch things as are the objects of faith, and not of ſenſe; ſuch things as are abſent and future, and not preſent and in poſſeſſion. For inſtance, the belief of an inviſible GOD, of a ſecret power and providence, that orders and governs all things, that can bleſs or blaſt us, and all our deſigns and undertakings, according as we demean our ſelves towards him, and endeavour to improve our ſelves to him; the perſuaſion of a ſecret aid and influence always ready at hand, to keep us from evil, and to ſtrengthen and aſſiſt us to that which is good; more eſpecially the firm belief and expectation of the happineſs of heaven, and the glorious rewards of another world, which though they be now at a diſtance, and inviſible to us, yet being grounded upon the promiſe of "GOD that cannot lie," ſhall certainly be made good.

And this faith, this firm perſuaſion of abſent and inviſible things, the apoſtle to the Hebrews tells us, was the great principle of the piety and virtue of good men from the beginning of the world. This he calls, chap. xi. verſe 1. the ὑπόστασις, or "the "confident expectation of things hoped for, and the "proof or evidence of things not ſeen," viz. a firm perſuaſion of the being and providence of GOD, and of the truth and faithfulneſs of his promiſes. Such was the faith of Abel, he believed "that there was "a GOD, and that he was a rewarder of thoſe that "faithfully ſerve him." Such was the faith of Noah, who being warned of GOD, of things at a great diſtance, and not ſeen as yet, notwithſtanding believed the divine prediction concerning the flood, and prepared an ark: ſuch alſo was the faith of Abraham, concerning a numerous poſterity by Iſaac, and the inheritance of the land of Canaan; and ſuch

likewiſe was the faith of Moſes, he did as firmly be- SERM. LXIV.
lieve the inviſible God, and the recompence of reward, as if he had beheld them with his eyes.

And of this recompence of reward, we Chriſtians have a much clearer revelation, and much greater aſſurance, than former ages and generations had; and the firm belief and perſuaſion of this, is the great motive and argument to a holy life; "the hope "which is ſet before us" of obtaining the happineſs and the fear of incurring the miſery, of another world. This made the primitive Chriſtians, with ſo much patience to bear the ſufferings and perſecutions, with ſo much conſtancy to venture upon the dangers and inconveniencies which the love of God and religion expoſed them to.

Under the former diſpenſation of the law, though good men received good hopes of the rewards of another life, yet theſe things were but obſcurely revealed to them, and the great inducements to obedience were temporal rewards and puniſhments; the promiſes of long life, and peace, and plenty, and proſperity, in that good land which God had given them, and the threatnings of war, and famine, and peſtilence, and being delivered into captivity. But now, under "the goſpel, life and immortality are "brought to light;" and the great arguments that bear ſway with Chriſtians, are the promiſes of everlaſting life, and the threatnings of eternal miſery; and the firm belief and perſuaſion of theſe is now the great principle that governs the lives and actions of good men: for what will not men do, that are really perſuaded, that as they do demean themſelves in this world, it will fare with them in the other; that the "wicked ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment, and "the righteous into life eternal." I proceed to the

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II. Obſervation, namely, that faith is a degree of aſſent, inferior to that of ſenſe, this is intimated in the oppoſition betwixt faith and ſight; "we walk "by faith," and "not by ſight;" that is, we believe theſe things, and are confidently perſuaded of the truth of them, though we never ſaw them, and conſequently cannot poſſibly have that degree of aſſurance concerning the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, which thoſe have who enjoy the one and endure the other.

There are different degrees of aſſurance concerning things ariſing from the different degrees of evidence we have for them. The higheſt degree of evidence we have for any thing, is our own ſenſe and experience; and this is ſo firm and ſtrong, that it is not to be ſhaken by the utmoſt pretence of a rational demonſtration; men will truſt their own ſenſes and experience, againſt any ſubtilty of reaſon whatſoever: but there are inferior degrees of aſſurance concerning things, as the teſtimony and authority of perſons every way credible: and this aſſurance we have in this ſtate concerning the things of another world, we believe with great reaſon, that we have the teſtimony of GOD concerning them, which is the higheſt kind of evidence in itſelf; and we have all the reaſonable aſſurance we can deſire, that GOD hath teſtified theſe things, and this is the utmoſt aſſurance which things future and at a diſtance are capable of.

But yet it is an unreaſonable obſtinacy to deny, that this falls very much ſhort of that degree of aſſurance which thoſe perſons have concerning theſe things, who are now in the other world, and have the ſenſe and experience of theſe things. And this is not only intimated here in the text, in the oppoſition of faith and ſight, but is plainly expreſt in other texts

of

of ſcripture, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. "We know now SERM. LXIV.
"but in part; but when that which is perfect is "come, that which is in part ſhall be done away." That degree of knowledge and aſſurance which we have in this life is very imperfect, in compariſon to what we ſhall have hereafter; and ver. 12. "We "now ſee as through a glaſs darkly, ἐν αἰνίγματι, "as in a riddle," in which there is always a great deal of obſcurity; all which expreſſions are certainly intended by way of abatement and diminution to the certainty of faith; becauſe it is plain, by "that which "is in any part" or "imperfect," the apoſtle means faith and hope, which he tells us ſhall ceaſe, when "that which is perfect," meaning viſion and ſight, is come. We ſee likewiſe in experience, that the faith and hope of the beſt Chriſtians in this life is accompanied with doubting concerning theſe things, and all doubting is a degree of uncertainty. But thoſe bleſſed ſouls who are entered upon the poſſeſſion of glory and happineſs, and thoſe miſerable wretches who lie groaning under the wrath of God and the ſeverity of his juſtice, cannot poſſibly, if they would, have any doubt concerning the truth and reality of theſe things.

But however contentious men may diſpute againſt common ſenſe, this is ſo plain a truth, that I will not labour in the farther proof of it; nor indeed is it reaſonable, while we are in this ſtate, to expect that degree of aſſurance concerning the rewards and puniſhments of another life, which the ſight and ſenſible experience of them would give us; and that upon theſe two accounts;

1. Becauſe our preſent ſtate will not admit it; and

2. If it would, it is not reaſonable we ſhould have it.

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1. Our preſent ſtate will not admit it. For while we are in this world, it is not poſſible we ſhould have that ſenſible experiment and trial how things are in the other. The things of the other world are remote from us, and far out of ſight, and we cannot have any experimental knowledge of them, till we our ſelves enter into that ſtate. Thoſe who are already paſt into it know how things are; thoſe happy ſouls who live in the reviving preſence of GOD, and are poſſeſſed of thoſe joys which we cannot now conceive, underſtand theſe things in another manner, and have a more perfect aſſurance concerning them, than it is poſſible for any man to have in this world; and thoſe wretched and miſerable ſpirits who feel the vengeance of GOD, and are plunged into the horrors of eternal darkneſs, do believe upon irreſiſtible evidence, and have other kind of convictions of the reality of that ſtate, and the inſupportable miſery of it, than any man is capable of in this world.

2. If our preſent ſtate would admit of this high degree of aſſurance, it is not fit and reaſonable that we ſhould have it. Such an over-powering evidence would quite take away the virtue of faith, and much leſſen that of obedience. Put the caſe that every man, ſome conſiderable time before his departure out of this life, were permitted to viſit the other world, to aſſure him how things are there, to view the manſions of the bleſſed, and to ſurvey the dark and loathſome priſons of the damned, to hear the lamentable outcries of miſerable and deſpairing ſouls, and to ſee the inconceivable anguiſh and torments they are in; after this, what virtue would it be in any man to believe theſe things? He that had been there and ſeen them, could not diſbelieve them if he would. Faith in this caſe would not be virtue, but neceſſity. And there-

fore

fore it is obſervable, that our SAVIOUR doth not pronounce them bleſſed, who believed his reſurrection, upon the forcible evidence of their own ſenſes, but, "bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have "believed." They might be happy in the effects of that faith, but there is no praiſe, no reward belongs to that faith which is wrought in man by ſo violent and irreſiſtible an evidence. It was the great commendation of Abraham's faith, that "againſt "hope he believed in hope," he believed the promiſe of GOD concerning a thing in itſelf very improbable: but it is no commendation at all to believe the things which we have ſeen, becauſe they admit of no manner of diſpute; no objection can be offered to ſhake our aſſent, unleſs we will run to the extremity of ſcepticiſm; for if we will believe any thing at all, we muſt yield to the evidence of ſenſe. This does ſo violently enforce our aſſent, that there can be no virtue in ſuch a faith.

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And as this would take away the virtue of faith, ſo it would very much leſſen that of our obedience. It is hardly to be imagined, that any man who had ſeen the bleſſed condition of good men in another world, and been an eye-witneſs of the intolerable torments of ſinners, ſhould ever after be tempted knowingly to do any thing that would deprive him of that happineſs, or bring him into that place of torment. Such a ſight could not chuſe but affect a man as long as he lived; and leave ſuch impreſſions upon his mind, of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of a holy life, and of the infinite danger of a wicked courſe, that we might ſooner believe that all men in the world ſhould conſpire to kill one another, than that ſuch a man, by conſenting to any deliberate act of ſin, ſhould wilfully throw himſelf into thoſe flames: no, his mind

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would be continually haunted with thoſe furies he had ſeen tormenting ſinners in another world, and the fearful ſhrieks and outcries of miſerable ſouls would be perpetually ringing in his ears; and the man would have ſo lively and terrible an imagination of the danger he was running himſelf upon, that no temptation would be ſtrong enough to conquer his fears, and to make him careleſs of his life and actions, after he had once ſeen how "fearful a thing it was to fall into "the hands of the living GOD:" ſo that in this caſe, the reaſon of mens obedience would be ſo violent, that the virtue of it muſt be very little; for what praiſe is due to any man, not to do thoſe things which none but a perfect madman would do? For certainly that man muſt be beſides himſelf, that could by any temptation be ſeduced to live a wicked life, after he had ſeen the ſtate of good and bad men in the other world; the glorious rewards of holineſs and virtue, and the diſmal event of a vicious and ſinful courſe. GOD hath deſigned this life for the trial of our virtue, and the exerciſe of our obedience; but there would hardly be any place for this, if there were a free and eaſy paſſage for us into the other world, to ſee the true ſtate of things there. What argument would it be of any man's virtue to forbear ſinning after he had been in hell, and ſeen the miſerable end of ſinners? But I proceed to the

III. And laſt obſervation; namely, that notwithſtanding faith be an inferior degree of aſſent; yet it is a principle of ſufficient force and power to govern our lives. "We walk by faith." Now, that the belief of any thing may have its effect upon us, it is requiſite that we be ſatisfied of theſe two things.

1. Of the certainty, and 2. of the great concernment of the thing. For if the thing be altogether uncer-

uncertain, it will not move us at all, we ſhall do nothing towards the obtaining of it, if it be good; nor for the avoiding and preventing of it, if it be evil: and if we are certain of the thing, yet if we apprehend it to be of no great moment and concernment, ſhall be apt to ſlight it, as not worth our regard: but the rewards and puniſhments of another world, which the goſpel propounds to our faith, are fitted to work upon our minds, both upon account of the certainty and concernment of them. For, SERM. LXIV.

1. We have ſufficient aſſurance of the truth of theſe things, as much as we are well capable of in this ſtate. Concerning things future and at a diſtance, we have the dictates of our reaſon arguing us into this perſuaſion from the conſideration of the juſtice of the divine providence, and from the promiſcuous and unequal adminiſtration of things in this world; from whence wiſe men in all ages have been apt to conclude, that there will be another ſtate of things after this life, wherein rewards and puniſhments ſhall be equally diſtributed. We have the general conſent of mankind in this matter: and to aſſure us, that theſe reaſonings are true, we have a moſt credible revelation of theſe things, God having ſent his Son from heaven to declare it to us, and given us a ſenſible demonſtration of the thing, in his reſurrection from the dead, and his viſible aſcenſion into heaven; ſo that there is no kind of evidence wanting, that the thing is capable of, but only our own ſenſe and experience of theſe things, of which we are not capable in this preſent ſtate. And there is no objection againſt all this, but what will bring all things into uncertainty, which do not come under our ſenſes, and which we ourſelves have not ſeen.

Nor is there any conſiderable intereſt to hinder men from the belief of theſe things, or to make them heſitate

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heſitate about them. For as for the other world, if at laſt there ſhould prove to be no ſuch thing, our condition after death will be the ſame with the condition of thoſe who diſbelieve theſe things; becauſe all will be extinguiſhed by death: but if things fall out otherwiſe (as moſt undoubtedly they will) and our ſouls after this life do paſs into a ſtate of everlaſting happineſs or miſery, then our great intereſt plainly lies in preparing ourſelves for this ſtate; and there is no other way to ſecure the great concernments of another world, but by believing thoſe things to be true, and governing all the actions of our lives by this belief. And as for the intereſts of this life, they are but ſhort and tranſitory, and conſequently of no conſideration in compariſon of the things which are eternal; (and yet as I have often told you) ſetting aſide the caſe of perſecution for religion, there is no real intereſt of this world, but it may be as well promoted and purſued to as great advantage, nay, uſually, to a far greater, by him that believes theſe things, and lives accordingly, than by any other perſon: for the belief of the rewards and puniſhments of another world is the greateſt motive and encouragement to virtue; and as all vice is naturally attended with ſome temporal inconvenience, ſo the practice of all chriſtian virtues doth in its own nature tend both to the welfare of particular perſons, and to the peace and proſperity of mankind.

But that which ought to weigh very much with us, is, that we have abundantly more aſſurance of the recompence of another world, than we have of many things in this world, which yet have a greater influence upon our actions, and govern the lives of the moſt prudent and conſiderate men. Men generally hazard

hazard their lives and eſtates upon terms of greater uncertainty, than the aſſurance which we have of another world. Men venture to take phyſick upon probable grounds of the integrity and ſkill of their phyſician; and yet the want of either of theſe may hazard their lives; and men take phyſick upon greater odds; for it certainly cauſeth pain and ſickneſs, and doth but uncertainly procure and recover health; the patient is ſure to be made ſick, but not certain to be made well; and yet the danger of being worſe, if not of dying, on the one hand, and the hope of ſucceſs and recovery on the other, make this hazard and trouble reaſonable. Men venture their whole eſtates to places which they never ſaw: and that there are ſuch places, they have only the concurrent teſtimony and agreement of men; nay, perhaps, have only ſpoken with them that have ſpoken with thoſe that have been there. No merchant ever inſiſted upon the evidence of a miracle to be wrought, to ſatisfy him that there were ſuch places as the Eaſt and Weſt-Indies, before he would venture to trade thither: and yet this aſſurance GOD hath been pleaſed to give the world of a ſtate beyond the grave, and of a bleſſed immortality in another life. SERM. LXIV.

Now what can be the reaſon that ſo ſlender evidence, ſo ſmall a degree of aſſurance will ſerve to encourage men to ſeek after the things of this world with great care and induſtry; and yet a great deal more will not ſuffice to put them effectually upon looking after the great concernments of another world, which are infinitely more conſiderable? No other reaſon of this can be given, but that men are partial in their affections towards theſe things. It is plain they have not the ſame love for GOD and religion, which they have for this world and the advantages of it;

and

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and therefore it is, that a leſs degree of aſſurance will engage them to ſeek after the one, than the other; and yet the reaſon is much ſtronger on the other ſide: for the greater the benefit and good is, which is offered to us, we ſhould be the more eager to ſeek after it, and ſhould be content to venture upon leſs probability. Upon exceſſive odds, a man would venture upon very ſmall hopes; for a mighty advantage, a man would be content to run a great hazard of his labour and pains upon little aſſurance. Where a man's life is concerned, every ſuſpicion of danger will make a man careful to avoid it. And will nothing affright men from hell, unleſs GOD carry them thither, and ſhew them the place of torments, and the flames of that fire which ſhall never be quenched?

I do not ſpeak this, as if theſe things had not abundant evidence; I have ſhewn that they have; but to convince men, how unreaſonable and cruelly partial they are about the concernments of their ſouls, and their eternal happineſs.

2. Suppoſing theſe things to be real and certain, they are of infinite concernment to us. For what can concern us more, than that eternal and unchangeable ſtate in which we muſt be fixt and abide for ever? If ſo vaſt a concern will not move us, and have no influence upon the government of our lives and actions, we do not deſerve the name of reaſonable creatures. What conſideration can be ſet before men, who are not touched with the ſenſe of ſo great an intereſt, as that of our happy or miſerable being to all eternity? Can we be ſo ſolicitous and careful about the concernment of a few days; and is it nothing to us what becomes of us for ever? Are we ſo tenderly concerned to avoid poverty and diſgrace, perſecution and ſuffering in this world; and ſhall we not much more

more "flee from the wrath which is to come," and endeavour "to eſcape the damnation of hell?" Are the ſlight and tranſitory enjoyments of this world worth ſo much thought and care? And is an eternal inheritance in the heavens not worth looking after? As there is no proportion betwixt the things which are temporal and the things which are eternal, ſo we ought in all reaſon to be infinitely more concerned for the one than for the other. SERM. LXIV.

The proper inference from all this diſcourſe is, that we would endeavour to ſtrengthen in ourſelves this great principle of a chriſtian life, the belief of another world, by repreſenting to ourſelves all thoſe arguments and conſiderations which may confirm us in this perſuaſion. The more reaſonable our faith is, and the ſurer grounds it is built upon, the more firm it will abide, when it comes to the trial, againſt all the impreſſions of temptations and aſſaults of perſecution. If our faith of another world be only a ſtrong imagination of theſe things, "ſo ſoon as tribulation "ariſeth, it will wither; becauſe it hath no root in "itſelf." Upon this account the apoſtle ſo often exhorts Chriſtians, to endeavour "to be eſtabliſhed in "the truth, to be rooted and grounded in the faith," that when perſecution comes, they may "continue "ſtedfaſt and unmoveable." This firmneſs of our belief will have a great influence upon our lives; if we be "ſtedfaſt and unmoveable" in our perſuaſion of theſe things, we ſhall be "abundant in the work of the LORD." The apoſtle joins theſe together, 1 Cor. xv. 58. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye "ſtedfaſt and unmovable, always abounding in the "work of the LORD, foraſmuch as ye know your "labour ſhall not be in vain in the LORD." Stedfaſt and unmovable, in what? In the belief of a bleſſed

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bleſſed reſurrection; which the more firmly any man believes, the more active and induſtrious will he be in the work and ſervice of GOD.

And that our faith may have a conſtant and powerful influence upon our lives, we ſhould frequently revolve in our minds the thoughts of another world, and of that vaſt eternity which we ſhall ſhortly launch into. The great diſadvantage of the arguments fetcht from another world, is this, that theſe things are at a diſtance from us, and not ſenſible to us, and therefore we are not apt to be ſo affected with them: preſent and ſenſible things weigh down all other conſiderations. And therefore to balance this diſadvantage; we ſhould often have theſe thoughts in our minds, and inculcate upon ourſelves the certainty of theſe things, and the infinite concernment of them; we ſhould reaſon thus with ourſelves; if theſe things be true, and will certainly be, why ſhould they not be to me, as if they were actually preſent? Why ſhould not I always live, as if heaven were open to my view, and "I ſaw JESUS ſtanding at the right "hand of GOD," with crowns of glory in his hands, ready to be ſet upon the heads of all thoſe who continue faithful and obedient to him? And why ſhould I not be as much afraid to commit any ſin, as if "hell "were naked before me," and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned?

Thus we ſhould, by frequent meditation, repreſent theſe great things to ourſelves, and bring them nearer to our minds, and oppoſe to the preſent temptations of ſenſe the great and endleſs happineſs and miſery of the other world. And if we would but thus exerciſe ourſelves about "the things which are not ſeen," and make eternity familiar to ourſelves, by a frequent meditation of it, we ſhould be very little moved with

preſent

preſent and ſenſible things; we ſhould walk and live by faith, as the men of the world do by ſenſe, and be more ſerious and earneſt in the purſuit of our great and everlaſting intereſt, than they are in the purſuit of ſenſual enjoyments, and ſhould make it the great buſineſs of this preſent and temporal life, to ſecure a future and eternal happineſs.

SERMON LXV.

The Danger of Apoſtaſy from the true Religion.

HEB. X. 38.

But if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.

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THE great deſign of this epiſtle, (whoever was the author of it, which I ſhall not now enquire into) is plainly this, to confirm the Jews, who were but newly converted to chriſtianity, in the ſtedfaſt profeſſion of that faith, which they had embraced, and to arm them againſt that temptation, which Chriſtians were then expoſed to, viz. the fierce and cruel perſecutions, which threatened thoſe of that profeſſion.

And to this purpoſe, he repreſents to them the excellency of that religion, above any other former revelation

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velation that God hath made of himſelf to the world; both in reſpect of the author and revealer of it, who was the Son of God, and in reſpect of the revelation itſelf; which, as it contains better, and more perfect directions for a good life, ſo likewiſe more powerful and effectual motives thereto, better promiſes, and more terrible threatnings, than were annexed to the obſervation of the Jewiſh law, or clearly and certainly diſcoverable by the light of nature. From theſe conſiderations, he earneſtly perſuades them, all along throughout this epiſtle, to continue conſtant in the profeſſion of this faith, and not to ſuffer themſelves to be frighted out of it by the terror of perſecution; chap. ii. ver. 1. "Therefore we ought to give the "more earneſt heed to the things which we have "heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip;" and chap. iv. 1. "Let us therefore fear, leſt a pro-"miſe being left us, of entering into his reſt, any "of you ſhould come ſhort of it;" and verſe 23. of this chapter, "Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our "faith, without wavering;" and to encourage them to conſtancy, he ſets before them the glorious rewards and recompences of the goſpel, verſe 35. "Caſt not away therefore your confidence, τὴν "παῤῥησίαν ὑμῶν, your free and open profeſſion of "chriſtianity, which hath great recompence of re-"ward."

And then on the other hand, to deter them from apoſtaſy from this profeſſion, he repreſents to them the horrible danger of it, here in the text, "but if "any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no plea-"ſure in him."

I ſhall briefly explain the words, and then proſecute that which I mainly intended in them. "If any man "draw back," ἐὰν ὑποστείληται: theſe words, with the

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the foregoing, are cited out of the prophet Habakkuk, chap. ii. ver. 3, 4. and they are cited by the apoſtle, according to the tranſlation of the LXX. which differs ſomewhat from the Hebrew; and the difference ariſeth from the various readings of the Hebrew word, which is rendered by the LXX, "to "draw back;" but by the change of a letter ſignifies "to be lifted up," as we render it in the prophet; but however that be, the apoſtle follows the tranſlation of the LXX, and accommodates it to his purpoſe. Ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, if "any man draw "back;" the word ſignifies to keep back, to withdraw, to ſneak and ſlink away out of fear, to fail, or faint in any enterprize: and thus this word is render'd in the new teſtament, Acts xx. 20. οὐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην, "I did not withhold," or "keep back "any thing that was profitable for you;" and ſo it is ſaid of St. Peter, Gal. ii. 12. "ὑπέστελλεν ἑαυτὸν, "he ſlunk away," or "withdrew himſelf, fearing "them of the circumciſion;" and the Hebrew word which is here render'd by the LXX. "to draw "back," is render'd elſewhere ἐκλείπειν, which is "to fail" or "faint;" from all which it appears, that by "drawing back," the apoſtle here means, mens quitting their profeſſion of chriſtianity, and ſlinking out of it, for fear of ſuffering for it.

"My ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him:" theſe words are plainly a μείωσις, and leſs is ſaid than is meant; for the meaning is, that GOD will be extremely diſpleaſed with them, and puniſh them very ſeverely. The like figure to this, you have Pſal. v. 4. "Thou art not a GOD that haſt pleaſure in "wickedneſs," which in the next verſe is explained, by his hatred and deteſtation of thoſe who are guilty of it, "thou hateſt all the workers of iniquity." So

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that the plain ſenſe of the words is this, that apoſtaſy from the profeſſion of GOD's true religion, is a thing highly provoking to him, and will be moſt ſeverely puniſh'd by him.

In ſpeaking to this argument, I ſhall conſider theſe four things.

I. The nature of this ſin of apoſtaſy from religion.

II. The ſeveral ſteps and degrees of it.

III. The heinouſneſs of it.

IV. The great danger of it, and the terrible puniſhment it expoſeth men to. And when I have ſpoken to theſe, I ſhall conclude all with a ſhort exhortation, "to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith "without wavering."

I. We will conſider the nature of this ſin of apoſtaſy from religion; and it conſiſts in forſaking or renouncing the profeſſion of religion, whether it be by an open declaration in words, or a virtual declaration of it by our actions; for it comes all to one in the ſight of GOD, and the different manner of doing it, does not alter the nature of the thing. He indeed that renounceth religion, by an open declaration in words, offers the greateſt and boldeſt defiance to it: but he is likewiſe an apoſtate, who ſilently withdraws himſelf from the profeſſion of it, who quits it for his intereſt, or for fear diſowns it, and ſneaks out of the profeſſion of it, and forſakes the communion of thoſe who own it. Thus Demas was an apoſtate, in quitting chriſtianity for ſome worldly intereſt. "Demas hath forſaken us, having loved this pre-"ſent world," ſaith St. Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10. And thoſe whom our SAVIOUR deſcribes, Matt. xiii. 20, "21. Who received the word into ſtony ground, "were apoſtates out of fear, "they heard the word, and

" with joy receiv'd it, but having no root in them- SERM
" ſelves, they endured but for a while, and when LXV.
" tribulation and perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the
" word, preſently they fall off.

And there is likewiſe a partial apoſtaſy from chriſtianity, when ſome fundamental article of it is denied, whereby, in effect and by conſequence, the whole chriſtian faith is overthrown. Of this Hymeneus and Philetus were guilty, of whom the apoſtle ſays, that they " erred concerning the truth, ſaying " that the reſurrection was paſt already, and thereby " overthrew the faith of ſome," 2 Tim. ii. 17. 18. that is, they turned the reſurrection into an allegory, and did thereby really deſtroy a moſt fundamental article of the chriſtian religion.

So that to make a man an apoſtate, it is not neceſſary that a man ſhould ſolemnly renounce his baptiſm, and declare chriſtianity to be falſe; there are ſeveral other ways whereby a man may bring himſelf under this guilt, as by a ſilent quitting of his religion, and withdrawing himſelf from the communion of all that profeſs it; by denying an eſſential doctrine of chriſtianity; by undermining the great end and deſign of it, by teaching doctrines which directly tend to encourage men in impenitence, and a wicked courſe of life, nay, to authoriſe all manner of impiety and vice, in telling men that whatever they do they cannot ſin; for which, the primitive Chriſtians did look upon the Gnoſticks, as no better than apoſtates from chriſtianity; and though they retained the name of Chriſtians, yet not to be truly and really ſo. And there is likewiſe a partial apoſtacy from the chriſtian religion; of which I ſhall ſpeak under the

II. Head I propoſed, which was, to conſider the ſeveral ſorts and degrees of apoſtaſy. The higheſt of

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all, is the renouncing and forſaking of chriſtianity, or of ſome eſſential part of it, which is a virtual apoſtaſy from it: but there are ſeveral tendencies towards this, which they who are guilty of are in ſome degree guilty of this ſin. As,

1. Indifferency in religion, and want of all ſort of concernment for it; when a man, though he never quitted his religion, yet is ſo little concerned for it, that a very ſmall occaſion or temptation would make him do it; he is contented to be reckoned in the number of thoſe who profeſs it, ſo long as it is the faſhion, and he finds no great inconvenience by it: but is ſo indifferent in his mind about it, (like Gallio, "who minding none of thoſe things") that he can turn himſelf into any other ſhape, when his intereſt requires it; ſo that though he never actually deſerted it, yet he is a kind of apoſtate, in the preparation and diſpoſition of his mind: and to ſuch perſons, that title which Solomon gives to ſome, may fitly enough be applied, they are "backſliders in heart."

2. Another tendency to this ſin, and a great degree of it, is withdrawing from the publick marks and teſtimonies of the profeſſion of religion, by forſaking the aſſemblies of Chriſtians for the worſhip and ſervice of God, to withdraw ourſelves from thoſe, for fear of danger or ſuffering, is a kind of denial of our religion. And this was the caſe of ſome in the apoſtles time, when perſecution grew hot, and the open profeſſion of chriſtianity dangerous: to avoid this danger, many appeared not in the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, for fear of being obſerved and brought into trouble for it. This the apoſtle taxeth ſome for in this chapter, and ſpeaketh of it as a letting go our profeſſion, and a kind of deſerting of chriſtianity, ver. 23. 25. "Let us hold faſt

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" the profeſſion of our faith without wavering, not SERM.
" forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together, as LXV.
" the manner of ſome is. " He doth not ſay they had quitted their profeſſion, but they had but a looſe hold of it, and were ſilently ſtealing away from it.

3. A light temper of mind, which eaſily receives impreſſions from thoſe who lye in wait to deceive and ſeduce men from the truth. When men are not well rooted and eſtabliſhed in religion, they are apt " to be inviegled by the crafty inſinuations of ſedu-
" cers, to be moved with every wind of doctrine," and " to be eaſily ſhaken in mind, " by every trifling piece of ſophiſtry, that is confidently obtruded upon them for a weighty argument.

Now this is a temper of mind which diſpoſeth men to apoſtaſy, and renders them an eaſy prey to every one that takes a pleaſure and pride in making proſelytes. It is true indeed, a man ſhould always have a mind ready to entertain truth, when it is fairly propoſed to him: but the main things of religion are ſo plainly revealed, and lye ſo obvious to every ordinary capacity, that every man may diſcern them: and when he hath once entertained them, ought to be ſtedfaſt and unmovable in them, and not ſuffer himſelf to be whiffled out of them by an inſignificant noiſe about the infallibility of a viſible church; much leſs ought he to be moved by any man's uncharitableneſs and poſitiveneſs, in damning all that are not of his mind.

There are ſome things ſo very plain, not only in ſcripture, but to the common reaſon of mankind, that no ſubtiety of diſcourſe, no pretended authority, or even infallibility of any church, ought to ſtagger us in the leaſt about them; as that we ought not, or cannot believe any thing in direct contradiction to

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ſenſe and reaſon; that the people ought to read and ſtudy the holy ſcriptures; and to ſerve GOD and pray to him in a language which they underſtand; that they ought to receive the ſacrament as our SAVIOUR inſtituted and appointed it, that is, in both kinds; that it can neither be our duty, nor lawful to do that which GOD hath forbidden, as he hath done the worſhip of images in the ſecond commandment, as plainly as words can do it. Upon any one of theſe points, a man would fix his foot, and ſtand alone againſt the whole world.

4. Another degree of apoſtaſy is, a departure from the purity of the chriſtian doctrine and worſhip, in a groſs and notorious manner. This is a partial, though not a total apoſtaſy from the chriſtian religion and there have been, and ſtill are ſome in the world who are juſtly charged with this degree of apoſtaſy from religion; namely ſuch, as though they retain and profeſs the belief of all the articles of the chriſtian faith, and worſhip "the only true GOD," and "him whom he hath ſent, JESUS CHRIST;" yet have grately perverted the chriſtian religion, by ſuperinducing, and adding new articles of faith, and groſs corruptions and ſuperſtitions in worſhip, and impoſing upon men the belief and practice of theſe, as neceſſary to ſalvation. And St. Paul is my warrant for this cenſure, who chargeth thoſe who added to the chriſtian religion the neceſſity of circumciſion, and obſerving the law of Moſes, and thereby perverted the goſpel of CHRIST, as guilty in ſome degree of apoſtacy from Chriſtianity; for he calls it, preaching another goſpel, Gal. i. 7, 8. "There be "ſome that trouble you, and would pervert the "Goſpel of CHRIST: but though we, or an angel "from heaven, preach any other goſpel to you, than

" that which we have preached, let him be accurſ- SER
" ed." And thoſe who were ſeduced by theſe teach- LXV.
ers, he chargeth them with having in ſome ſort quitted the goſpel of CHRIST, and embraced another goſpel, ver. 6. " I marvel that ye are ſo ſoon " removed from him that called you into the grace " of CHRIST, unto another goſpel." So that they who thus pervert and corrupt the chriſtian doctrine or worſhip, are plainly guilty of a partial apoſtaſy from chriſtianity; and they who quit the purity of the chriſtian doctrine and worſhip, and go over to the communion of thoſe who have thus perverted chriſtianity, are in a moſt dangerous ſtate, and, in the judgment of St. Paul, are in ſome ſort removed unto another goſpel. I ſhall now proceed in the

III. Place, to conſider the heinouſneſs of this ſin. And it will appear to be very heinous, if we conſider, what an affront it is to GOD, and how great a contempt of him. When GOD hath revealed his will to mankind, and ſent no leſs perſon than " his " own Son" out of his own boſom to do it, and hath given ſuch teſtimonies to him from heaven, by " ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts " of the Holy Ghoſt; " when he hath tranſmitted down to us, ſo faithful a record of this revelation, and of the miracles wrought to confirm it, in the books of the holy ſcriptures; and when we ourſelves have ſo often declared our firm belief of this revelation; yet after all this to fall from it, and deny it, or any part of it, or to embrace doctrines and practices plainly contrary to it; this certainly cannot be done without the greateſt affront and contempt of the teſtimony of GOD himſelf; for it is in effect, and by interpretation, to declare, that either we do not believe what GOD ſays, or that we do not fear what

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he can do. So St. John tells us, 1 ep. v. 10. "He that believeth not GOD, hath made him a "liar, becauſe he believeth not the record which "GOD hath given of his Son."

And all along in this epiſtle to the Hebrews, the apoſtle ſets himſelf to aggravate this ſin; calling it "an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living "GOD," chap. iii. 12. And he frequently calls it ſo, κατ' ἐξοχήν, and by way of eminency, as being of all ſins the greateſt and moſt heinous, chap. x. 26. "If we ſin wilfully, after we have received the know-"ledge of the truth." That the apoſtle here ſpeaks of the ſin of apoſtaſy, is plain from the whole ſcope of his diſcourſe; for having exhorted them before, ver. 23. "to hold faſt the profeſſion of their faith "without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling "of themſelves together," he immediately adds, "for if we ſin wilfully; after we have received the "knowledge of the truth;" that is, if we fall off from chriſtianity, after we have embraced it. And chap. xii. 1. "Let us lay aſide every weight, and the "ſin which ſo eaſily beſets us," that is, the great ſin of apoſtaſy from religion, to which they were then ſo ſtrongly tempted by that fierce perſecution which attended it; and therefore he adds, "let us "run with patience the race which is ſet before us," that is, let us arm ourſelves with patience againſt the ſufferings we are like to meet with in our chriſtian courſe. To oppoſe the truth, and reſiſt the clear evidence of it, is a great ſin, and men are juſtly condemned for it, John iii. 19. "This is the condemna-"tion, that light is come into the world, and men "loved darkneſs rather than light:" but to deſert the truth after we have been convinced of it, to fall off from the profeſſion of it, after we have embraced it;

it, is a much greater ſin. Oppoſition to the truth may proceed, in a great meaſure, from ignorance and prejudice, which is a great extenuation; and therefore St. Paul tells us, that after all his violent perſecution of chriſtianity, "he found mercy, becauſe he "did it ignorantly and in unbelief." To revolt from the truth, after we have made profeſſion of it, "after we have known the way of righteouſneſs, to "turn from the holy commandment;" this is the great aggravation. The apoſtle makes wilfulneſs, an uſual ingredient into the ſin of apoſtaſy, "if we "ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge "of the truth." SERM. LXV.

And as this ſin is one of the greateſt affronts to GOD, ſo it is the higheſt and moſt effectual diſparagement of religion: for it is not ſo much conſidered, what the enemies of religion ſpeak againſt it, becauſe "they ſpeak evil of the things which they "know not," and of which they have had no trial and experience; but he that falls off from religion, after he hath made profeſſion of it, declares to the world, that he hath tried it, and diſlikes it, and pretends to leave it, becauſe he hath not found that truth and goodneſs in it which he expected, and upon long experience of it, ſees reaſon to prefer another religion before it. So that nothing can be more deſpiteful to religion than this, and more likely to bring it into contempt; and therefore the apoſtle (ver. 29th of this chapter) calls it a "trampling under foot the "Son of GOD, and making the blood of the cove-"nant a profane thing, and offering deſpite to the "ſpirit of grace:" for we cannot put a greater ſcorn upon the Son of GOD, who revealed this doctrine to the world; nor upon his blood, which was ſhed to confirm and ſeal the truth of it; and upon

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the Holy Ghoſt, who came down in miraculous gifts to give teſtimony to it; than notwithſtanding all this, to renounce this doctrine, and to forſake this religion. But we ſhall yet farther ſee the heinouſneſs of this ſin, in the terrible puniſhment it expoſeth men to; which was the

IV. And laſt thing I propoſed to conſider. And this is repreſented to us in a moſt terrible manner, not only in this epiſtle, but in other places of ſcripture. This ſin is placed in the higheſt rank of pardonable ſins, and next to the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which our SAVIOUR declares to be abſolutely unpardonable. And indeed the ſcripture ſpeaks very doubtfully of the pardonableneſs of this ſin, as being near akin to that againſt the Holy Ghoſt, being ſaid to be an "offering deſpite to the ſpirit of grace." In the 6th chapter of this epiſtle, ver. 4, 5, 6. the apoſtle ſpeaks in a very ſevere manner, concerning the ſtate of thoſe, who had apoſtatized from chriſtianity, after the ſolemn profeſſion of it in baptiſm; "it "is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightned" (that is baptized) "and have taſted of the heavenly gift," (that is regeneration) "and were made par- "takers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the "good word of GOD, and the powers of the world "to come," (that is, have been inſtructed in the chriſtian religion, and endowed with the miraculous powers of the goſpel age, for the Jews uſed to call the age of the Meſſias, *ſeculum futurum*, or, the world to come) "it is impoſſible for thoſe to be "renewed again unto repentance;" where the leaſt we can underſtand by impoſſible, is, that it is extremely difficult; for ſo the word impoſſible is ſometimes uſed; as when our SAVIOUR ſays, "it is impoſſible for a rich man to enter into the "king-

" kingdom of heaven." And ch. x. 26. the apo- SERM. LXV.
ſtle ſpeaking of the ſame thing, ſays, "if we ſin wil-
" fully, after we have received the knowledge of the
" truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin;"
that is, they who renounce chriſtianity, ſince they
reject the only way of expiation, " there remains no
" more ſacrifice for their ſins."

St. Peter likewiſe expreſſeth himſelf very ſeverely concerning this ſort of perſons, 2 epiſt. ii. 20, 21. " For if after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the " world, through the knowledge of the LORD and " SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST," (that is, after they have been brought from heatheniſm to chriſtianity) " they are entangled therein again, and overcome; " the latter end is worſe with them than the begin- " ing." He ſeems loth to ſay how ſad the condition of ſuch perſons is; but this he tells them, that it is much worſe than when they were heathens before; and he gives the reaſon, " for it had been better for " them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, " than after they have known it, to turn from the " holy commandment delivered unto them." And St. John calls this ſin of apoſtaſy, the " ſin unto " death;" and though he do not forbid Chriſtians to pray for them that are guilty of it; yet he will not ſay, that they ſhould pray for them. 1 epiſt. v. 16, " If any man ſee his brother ſin a ſin, which is " not unto death, he ſhall aſk, and he ſhall give him " life, for them that ſin not unto death; there is a " ſin unto death, I do not ſay, that he ſhall pray for " it. Now that by this " ſin unto death," the apoſtle means apoſtaſy from the chriſtian religion to idolatry, is moſt probable from what follows, ver. 18. " we know that whoſoever is born of GOD ſinneth " not," (that is, this ſin unto death) " but he that

" is

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" is begotten of GOD keepeth himſelf, and the wicked " one toucheth him not," (that is, he is preſerved from idolatry, unto which the devil had ſeduced ſo great a part of mankind) " and we know that we " are of GOD, and the whole world, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, is under the dominion of that wicked one," (viz. the devil, whom the ſcripture elſewhere calls " the GOD of this world;) and we know that the " Son of GOD is come, and hath given us an under- " ſtanding, that we may know him that is true," (that is, hath brought us from the worſhip of falſe Gods, to the knowledge and worſhip of the true GOD;) and then he concludes, " little children, keep " your ſelves from idols;" which caution hath no manner of dependance upon what went before; unleſs we underſtand " the ſin unto death," in this ſenſe; and it is the more probable, that it is ſo to be underſtood, becauſe apoſtaſy is ſo often in this epiſtle to the Hebrews, called " the ſin," by way of eminency, as it is here by St. John, " whoſoever is born of GOD " ſinneth not."

So that at the very beſt, the ſcripture ſpeaks doubtfully of the pardon of this ſin; however, that the puniſhment of it, unrepented of, ſhall be very dreadful. It ſeems to be mildly expreſt here in the text, " If any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no " pleaſure in him:" But it is the more ſevere, for being expreſt ſo mildly, according to the intention of the figure here uſed; and therefore in the next words, this expreſſion of GOD's taking no pleaſure in ſuch perſons, is explained by their utter ruin and perdition; " but we are not of them that draw back unto " perdition." And in ſeveral parts of this epiſtle, there are very ſevere paſſages to this purpoſe; ch. ii. 2, 3. " If the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt,

" and

" and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received SERM.
" a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall we LXV.
" eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?" And
ch. x. 26, 27. " If we ſin wilfully, after we have
" received the knowledge of the truth, there re-
" maineth no more ſacrifice for ſin; but a certain
" fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indigna-
" tion, which ſhall devour the adverſary. He that
" deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy, under
" two or three witneſſes; of how much ſorer puniſh-
" ment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, that
" hath trodden under foot the Son of GOD! &c.
" For we know him who hath ſaid, vengeance is
" mine, I will recompenſe, ſaith the LORD:" and
again, " the LORD ſhall judge his people. It is a
" fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living
" GOD." What can be more ſevere and terrible
than theſe expreſſions?

I will mention but one text more, and that is Rev. xxi. 8. where, in the catalogue of great ſinners, thoſe who apoſtatize from religion, out of fear, do lead the van; " he that overcometh ſhall inherit all
" things," (which is elſewhere in this book expreſt, by continuing faithful unto the death.) " He that
" overcometh, ſhall inherit all things; and I will be
" his GOD, and he ſhall be my ſon: but the fearful,
" and unbelieving, and the abominable, and whore-
" mongers, and ſorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,
" ſhall have their part in the lake, which burneth
" with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond
" death." The fearful, and unbelievers, and liars; that is, they who out of fear relapſe into infidelity, and abide not in the truth, ſhall be reckoned in the firſt rank of offenders, and be puniſhed accordingly.

And

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And thus I have done with the four things I propounded to ſpeak to, from theſe words; the nature of apoſtaſy; the ſeveral ſteps and degrees of it; the heinous nature of this ſin; the danger of it, and the terrible puniſhment it expoſeth men to.

And is there any need now, to exhort men "to "hold faſt the profeſſion of faith," when the danger of drawing back is ſo evident, and ſo terrible? Or is there any reaſon and occaſion for it? Certainly there is no great danger amongſt us, of mens apoſtatizing from chriſtianity, and turning Jews, or Turks, or Heathens; I do not think there is, but yet for all that, we are not free from the danger of apoſtaſy; there is great danger not of mens apoſtatizing from one religion to another, but from religion to infidelity and atheiſm; and of this worſt kind of apoſtaſy of all other, I wiſh the age we live in had not afforded us too many inſtances. It is greatly to be lamented, that among thoſe who have profeſſed chriſtianity, any ſhould be found, that ſhould make it their endeavour to undermine the great principles of all religion; the belief of a GOD, and his providence; and of the immortality of the ſouls of men; and a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life; and to bring the moſt ſerious matters in the world into contempt, and to turn them into jeſt and rallery. This is not only a renouncing of chriſtianity, the religion which GOD hath revealed, but even of the religion which is born with us, and the principles and notions which GOD hath planted in every man's mind; this is an impiety of the firſt magnitude, and not to be mentioned without grief and horror; and this, it is to be feared, hath had a great hand in thoſe great calamities which our eyes have ſeen; and I pray GOD it do not draw down ſtill more and greater judgments upon

upon this nation: but I hope there are none here that need to be cautioned againſt this horrible impiety, and higheſt degree of "apoſtaſy from the living GOD:" that which people are much more in danger of, is apoſtaſy from the purity of the chriſtian doctrine and worſhip, ſo happily recovered by a regular reformation, and eſtabliſhed among us by all the authority that laws, both eccleſiaſtical and civil, can give it; and which, in truth, is no other, than the ancient and primitive chriſtianity; I ſay, a defection from this, to thoſe groſs errors and ſuperſtitions, which the reformation had pared off, and freed us from. I do not ſay, that this is a total apoſtaſy from chriſtianity; but it is a partial apoſtaſy and defection, and a very dangerous one; and that thoſe, who, "after they have "received the knowledge of the truth," fall off from it into thoſe errors and corruptions, are highly guilty before GOD, and their condition certainly worſe, and more dangerous, than of thoſe who are brought up in thoſe errors and ſuperſtitions, and never knew better; for there are terrible threatnings in ſcripture againſt thoſe who fall away from the truth, which they once embraced, and were convinced of; "if we "ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge "of the truth," &c. and, "if any man draw back, "my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him." SERM. LXV.

GOD conſiders every man's advantages and opportunities of knowledge, and their diſadvantages likewiſe; and makes all reaſonable allowances for them; and for men to continue in the errors they have been always brought up in; or, which comes much to one, in errors which they were led into by principles early infuſed into them, before they were in any meaſure competent judges of thoſe matters; I ſay, for ſuch perſons to continue in thoſe errors, and to oppoſe

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oppoſe and reject the contrary truths, againſt which, by their education, they have received ſo ſtrong and violent a prejudice, this may be in a great degree excuſable, and find pardon with GOD, upon a general repentance for all ſins, both known and unknown, and cannot be reaſonably charged with the guilt of this great ſin of apoſtaſy: but not to abide in the truth, after we have entertained and profeſſed it, having ſufficient means and advantages of knowing it, hath no excuſe.

I would not be raſh in condemning particular perſons of any ſociety or communion of Chriſtians, provided they be ſincerely devout, and juſt, and ſober, to the beſt of their knowledge; I had much rather leave them to GOD, whoſe mercies are great, than to paſs an uncharitable cenſure upon them, as to their eternal ſtate and condition: but the caſe is far otherwiſe, where the opportunities of knowledge are afforded to men, and "men love darkneſs rather than "light;" for they who have the means and advantages of "knowing their maſter's will," are anſwerable to GOD as if they had known it; becauſe if they had not been groſly negligent, and wanting to themſelves, they might have known it.

And this, I fear, is the caſe of the generality of thoſe who have been bred up to years of conſideration and choice in the reformed religion, and forſake it; becauſe they do it without ſufficient reaſon, and there are invincible objections againſt it: they do it without ſufficient reaſon; becauſe every one amongſt us knows, or may know upon very little enquiry, that we hold all the articles of the faith, which are contained in the ancient creeds of the chriſtian church, and into which all Chriſtians are baptized; that we inculcate upon men the neceſſity of a good life, and

of ſincere repentance, and perfect contrition for our ſins, ſuch as is followed with real reformation and amendment of our lives, and that without this no man can be ſaved by any device whatſoever. SERM. LXV.

Now what reaſon can any man have to queſtion, whether he may be ſaved in that faith which ſaved the firſt Chriſtians, and by believing the twelve articles of the apoſtles creed, though he cannot ſwallow the twelve articles which are added to it in the creed of pope Pius IV. every one of which, beſides many and great corruptions and ſuperſtitions in worſhip, are ſo many and invincible objections againſt the communion of the Roman church, as I could particularly ſhew, if it had not been already done, in ſo many learned treatiſes upon this argument? What is there then, that ſhould move any reaſonable man to forſake the communion of our church, and to quit the reformed religion?

There are three things chiefly with which they endeavour to amuſe and affright weaker minds.

1. A great noiſe of infallibility, which they tell us is ſo excellent a means to determine and put an end to all differences. To which I ſhall at preſent only object this prejudice; that there are not wider and hotter differences among us, about any thing whatſoever, than are amongſt them, about this admirable means of ending all differences; as, where this infallibility is ſeated, that men may know how to have recourſe to it, for the ending of differences.

2. They endeavour to fright men with the danger of ſchiſm. But every man knows, that the guilt of ſchiſm lies at their door, who impoſe ſinful articles of communion; and not upon them, who for fear of ſinning againſt GOD, cannot ſubmit to thoſe articles;

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which we have done, and are ſtill ready to make good, to be the caſe betwixt us and the church of Rome. But,

3. The terrible engine of all is, their poſitive and confident damning of all that live and die out of the communion of their church. This I have fully ſpoken to upon another occaſion, and therefore ſhall only ſay at preſent, that every man ought to have better thoughts of GOD, than to believe, that he, "who delighteth not in the death of ſinners," and "would have all men to be ſaved, and come to the "knowledge of the truth," will confirm the ſentence of ſuch uncharitable men, as take upon them to condemn men for thoſe things, for which our SAVIOUR in his goſpel condemns no man. And of all things in the world, one would think, that the uncharitableneſs of any church ſhould be an argument to no man, to run into its communion.

I ſhall conclude with the apoſtle's exhortation, ver. 23. of this chapter, "let us hold faſt the pro-"feſſion of our faith without wavering; and pro-"voke one another to charity and good works; "and ſo much the more, becauſe the day approach-"eth, in which GOD will judge the faith and lives "of men, by JESUS CHRIST, according to his "goſpel."

SERMON

SERMON LXVI.

Of ſelf-denial and ſuffering for CHRIST's ſake.

MATTH. XVI. 24.

Then ſaid JESUS *unto his diſciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me.*

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The firſt ſermon on this text.

"THEN ſaid JESUS to his diſciples," that is, upon occaſion of his former diſcourſe with them, wherein he had acquainted them with his approaching paſſion, that he muſt ſhortly go up to Jeruſalem, and there ſuffer many things of the elders and chief prieſts and ſcribes, and at laſt be put to death by them; "then ſaid JESUS unto his diſciples, "if any man will come after me, let him deny him-"ſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me."

"If any man will come after me, or follow me;" that is, if any man will be my diſciple, and undertake the profeſſion of my religion; if any man chuſe and reſolve to be a Chriſtian; he muſt be ſo upon theſe terms, he muſt "deny himſelf, and take up his "croſs and follow me;" he muſt follow me in ſelf-denial and ſuffering.

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe four things.

I. I ſhall conſider the way and method which our SAVIOUR uſeth in making proſelytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of

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force and violence to compel them to the profeſſion of his religion; but fairly offers it to their conſideration and choice, and tells them plainly upon what terms they muſt be his diſciples; and if they be contented and reſolved to ſubmit to theſe terms, well; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer; for "they cannot be his diſciples."

II. I ſhall endeavour to explain this duty of ſelf-denial, expreſſed in theſe words, "let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs and follow me."

III. I ſhall conſider the ſtrict and indiſpenſable obligation of it, whenever we are called to it, "without this we cannot be CHRIST's diſciples; if any "man will come after me," or "be my diſciple, "let him deny himſelf.

IV. I ſhall endeavour to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this precept, of ſelf-denial and ſuffering for CHRIST, which at firſt appearance may ſeem to be ſo very harſh and difficult; and I ſhall go over theſe particulars as briefly as I can.

I. We will conſider the way and method which our SAVIOUR here uſeth in making proſelytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profeſſion of his religion; but fairly propoſeth it to their conſideration and choice, telling them plainly upon what terms they muſt be his diſciples; if they like them, and are content, and reſolved to ſubmit to them, well; he is willing to receive them, and own them for his diſciples; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer: for "they cannot be his diſciples." As on the one hand, he offers them no worldly preferment and advantage, to entice them into his religion, and to tempt them outwardly to profeſs what they do not inwardly believe; ſo on the other hand, he

he does not haul and drag them by force, and awe them by the terrors of torture and death to ſign the chriſtian faith, though moſt undoubtedly true, and to confeſs with their mouths, and ſubſcribe with their hands, what they do not believe in their hearts. He did not obtrude his ſacraments upon them, and plunge them into the water to baptize them, whether they would or no, and thruſt the ſacrament of bread into their mouths; as if men might be worthy receivers of that bleſſed ſacrament, whether they receive it willingly or no. SERM. LXVI.

Our bleſſed SAVIOUR, the author and founder of our religion, made uſe of none of theſe ways of violence, ſo contrary to the nature of man, and of all religion, and eſpecially of chriſtianity, and fitted only to make men hypocrites, but not converts; he only ſays, "if any man will be my diſciple;" he uſeth no arguments, but ſuch as are ſpiritual, and proper to work upon the minds and conſciences of men. For as his "kingdom was not of this world," ſo neither are the motives and arguments to induce men to be his ſubjects, taken from this world; but from the endleſs rewards and puniſhments of another. "The weapons" which he made uſe of, to ſubdue men to the obedience of faith, were not "carnal;" and yet they were "mighty through GOD," to conquer the obſtinacy and infidelity of men. This great and infallible teacher, who certainly came from GOD, all that he does, is to propoſe his religion to men, with ſuch evidence and ſuch arguments as are proper to convince men of the truth and goodneſs of it, and to perſuade men to embrace it; and he acquaints them likewiſe with all the worldly diſadvantages of it, and the hazards and ſufferings that would attend it; and now, if upon full conſideration, they will make his

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religion their free choice, and become his diſciples, he is willing to receive them; if they will not, he underſtands the nature of religion better, than to go about to force it upon men, whether they will or no.

II. I ſhall endeavour to explain this duty or precept of ſelf-denial, expreſſed in theſe words, "let him "deny himſelf, and take up his croſs." Theſe are difficult terms, for a man "to deny himſelf, and "take up his own croſs," that is, willingly to ſubmit to all thoſe ſufferings which the malice of men may inflict for the ſake of CHRIST and his religion. For this expreſſion of "taking up one's croſs," is a plain alluſion to the Roman cuſtom, which was this, that he that was condemned to be crucified, was to take his croſs upon his ſhoulders, and to carry it to the place of execution; this the Jews made our SAVIOUR to do, as we read, John xix. 17. till that being ready to faint under it, and leſt he ſhould die away before he was nailed to the croſs, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry it for him, as is declared by the other evangeliſts: and yet he tells them, "they that will be his diſciples muſt follow him, "bearing their own croſs," that is, being ready (if GOD call them to it) to ſubmit to the like ſufferings for him and his truth, which he was ſhortly to undergo for the truth, and for their ſakes.

But though theſe terms ſeem very hard, yet they are not unreaſonable, as I ſhall ſhew in the concluſion of this diſcourſe. Some indeed have made them ſo by extending this ſelf-denial too far, attending more to the latitude of the words, than to the meaning and ſcope of our SAVIOUR's diſcourſe: for there is no doubt, but that there are a great many things, which may properly enough be called ſelf-denial, which yet our SAVIOUR never intended to oblige Chriſtians to.

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It is no doubt, great ſelf-denial, for a man, without any neceſſity, to deny himſelf the neceſſary ſupports of life; for a man to ſtarve and make away himſelf: but no man certainly ever imagined, that our SAVIOUR ever intended by this precept to enjoin this kind of ſelf-denial. SERM. LXVI.

It is plain then, that there is no reaſon or neceſſity to extend this precept of our SAVIOUR, concerning ſelf-denial, to every thing that may properly enough be called by that name; and therefore this precept muſt be limited by the plain ſcope and intendment of our SAVIOUR's diſcourſe; and no man can argue thus; ſuch a thing is ſelf-denial, therefore our SAVIOUR requires it of his diſciples: for our SAVIOUR doth not here require all kinds of ſelf-denial; but limits it by his diſcourſe to one certain kind, beyond which ſelf-denial is no duty by virtue of this text; and therefore for our clearer underſtanding of this precept of ſelf-denial, I ſhall do theſe two things:

Firſt, remove ſome ſorts of ſelf-denial, which are inſtanced in by ſome, as intended in this precept.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew what kind of ſelf-denial that is, which our SAVIOUR here intends.

Firſt, there are ſeveral things brought under this precept of ſelf-denial, which were never intended by our SAVIOUR. I ſhall inſtance in two or three things, which are moſt frequently inſiſted upon, and ſome of them by very devout and well-meaning men; as, that in matters of faith, we ſhould deny and renounce our own ſenſes and our reaſon; nay, that we ſhould be content to renounce our own eternal happineſs, and be willing to be damned for the glory of GOD, and the good of our brethren. But all theſe are ſo apparently and groſly unreaſonable,

SERM. LXVI. that it is a wonder that any one ſhould ever take them for inſtances of that ſelf-denial which our SAVIOUR requires; eſpecially conſidering, that in all his diſcourſe of ſelf-denial, he does not ſo much as glance at any of theſe inſtances, or any thing like to them.

1. Some comprehend under ſelf-denial, the denying and renouncing our own ſenſes in matters of faith. And if this could be made out to be intended by our SAVIOUR in this precept, we needed not diſpute any of the other inſtances. For he that renounceth the certainty of ſenſe, ſo as not to believe what he ſees, may after this renounce and deny any thing. For the evidence of ſenſe is more clear and unqueſtionable than that of faith, as the ſcripture frequently intimates; as John xx. 29. where our SAVIOUR reproves Thomas, for refuſing to believe his reſurrection, upon any leſs evidence than that of ſenſe; "Becauſe thou haſt ſeen, thou haſt believed: bleſſed "are they which have not ſeen, and yet have be-"lived," which plainly ſuppoſeth the evidence of ſenſe to be the higheſt and cleareſt degree of evidence. So likewiſe that of St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 7. "We walk by faith, and not by ſight;" where the evidence of faith, as that which is more imperfect and obſcure, is oppoſed to that of ſight, as more clear and certain. So that to believe any article of faith, in contradiction to the clear evidence of ſenſe, is contrary to the very nature of aſſent, which always yields to the greateſt and cleareſt evidence.

Beſides that our belief of religion is at laſt reſolved into the certainty of ſenſe: ſo that by renouncing that, we deſtroy and undermine the very foundation of our faith. One of the plaineſt and principal proofs of the being of GOD (which is the firſt and funda-

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mental article of all religion) relies upon the certainty of ſenſe, namely, the frame of this viſible world, by the contemplation whereof we are led to the acknowledgment of the inviſible author of it. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. i. 20. that "the inviſible things "of GOD from the creation of the world, are clearly "ſeen, being underſtood by the things which are "made, even his eternal power and godhead." SERM. LXVI.

And the great external evidence of the chriſtian religion, I mean miracles, is at laſt reſolved into the certainty of ſenſe, without which we can have no aſſurance that any miracle was wrought for the confirmation of it.

And the knowledge likewiſe of the chriſtian faith, is conveyed to us by our ſenſes; the evidence whereof if it be uncertain, takes away all certainty of faith. "How ſhall they believe," ſaith St. Paul, Rom. x. 14. "how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they "have not heard?" And ver. 17. "So then faith "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of "GOD." So that to deny and renounce our ſenſes in matters of faith, is to take away the main pillar and foundation of it.

2. Others, almoſt with equal abſurdity, would comprehend under our SAVIOUR's precept of ſelf-denial, the denying and renouncing of our reaſon in matters of faith. And this is ſelf-denial with a witneſs, for a man to deny his own reaſon; for it is to deny himſelf to be a man. This ſurely is a very great miſtake, and though the ground of it may be innocent; yet the conſequences of it, and the diſcourſes upon it, are very abſurd.

The ground of the miſtake is this. Men think they deny their own reaſon, when they aſſent to the revelation of GOD in ſuch things, as their own reaſon could neither have diſcovered, nor is able to give the

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the reaſon of: whereas in this caſe, a man is ſo far from denying his own reaſon, that he does that which is moſt agreeable to it. For what more reaſonable than to believe whatever we are ſufficiently aſſured is revealed to us by GOD, who can neither be deceived himſelf, nor deceive us?

But though the ground of this miſtake may be innocent, yet the conſequences of it are moſt abſurd and dangerous. For if we are to renounce our reaſon in matters of faith, then are we bound to believe without reaſon, which no man can do; or if he could, then faith would be unreaſonable, and infidelity reaſonable. So that this inſtance likewiſe of ſelf-denial, to renounce and deny our own reaſon, as it is no where expreſt, ſo it cannot reaſonably be thought to be intended by our SAVIOUR in this precept.

3. Nor doth this precept of ſelf-denial require men to be content to renounce their own eternal happineſs, and to be willing to be damned for the glory of GOD, and the good of their brethren. If this were the meaning of this precept, we might juſtly ſay, as the diſciples did to our SAVIOUR, in another caſe, "this is a hard ſaying, and who can bear it?" The very thought of this is enough to make human nature to tremble at its very foundation. For the deepeſt principle that GOD hath planted in our nature is "the deſire of our own preſervation and happineſs," and into this the force of all laws, and the reaſon of all our duty is at laſt reſolved.

From whence it plainly follows, that it can be no man's duty in any caſe to renounce his own happineſs, and to be content to be for ever miſerable; becauſe if once this be made a duty, there will be no argument left, to perſuade any man to it. For the moſt powerful arguments, that GOD ever uſed, to perſuade

perſuade men to any thing, are the promiſe of eternal happineſs, and the terror of everlaſting torments: but if this were a man's duty, to be content to be miſerable for ever, neither of theſe arguments would be of force ſufficient to perſuade a man to it. SERM. LXVI.

The firſt of theſe, namely, the promiſe of eternal happineſs could ſignify nothing to him that is to be eternally miſerable; becauſe if he be to be ſo, it is impoſſible that he ſhould ever have the benefit of that promiſe: and the threatning of eternal miſery, could be no argument in this caſe; becauſe the duty is juſt as difficult, as the argument is powerful, and no man can be moved to ſubmit to any thing that is grievous and terrible, but by ſomething that is more terrible; for if it be not, it is the ſame thing, whether he ſubmit to it or not; and then no man can be content, to be eternally miſerable, only for the fear of being ſo; for this would be for a man to run himſelf upon that very inconvenience which he is ſo much afraid of; and 'tis madneſs for a man to die for fear of death. *Quis novus hic furor eſt, ne moriare, mori?*

By this it plainly appears, how unreaſonable it is to imagine, that by this precept of ſelf-denial, our SAVIOUR ſhould require men to renounce everlaſting happineſs, and to be content to be miſerable for ever, upon any account whatſoever; becauſe this were to ſuppoſe, that GOD hath impoſed that upon us as a duty, to oblige us whereto there can be no argument offered that can be powerful enough.

As for the glory of GOD, which is pretended to be the reaſon, it is an impoſſible ſuppoſition; becauſe it cannot be for the glory of GOD, to make a creature for ever miſerable, that ſhall not by his wilful obſtinacy and impenitence deſerve to be ſo. But this is only caſt in to add weight.

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The other reaſon of the good and ſalvation of our brethren, is the only conſideration for which there is any manner of colour from ſcripture; and two inſtances are alledged to this purpoſe, of two very excellent perſons, that ſeem to have deſired this, and to have ſubmitted to it; and therefore it is not ſo unreaſonable as we would make it, that our SAVIOUR ſhould enjoin it as a duty. The inſtances alledged are theſe. Moſes deſired of GOD that he might be blotted out of the book of life, rather than the people of Iſrael, whom he had conducted and governed ſo long, ſhould be deſtroyed: and in the new teſtament St. Paul tells us, that "he could wiſh that himſelf "were accurſed from CHRIST, for his brethren;" ſo earneſt a deſire had he of their ſalvation.

But neither of theſe inſtances are of force ſufficient to overthrow the reaſons of my former diſcourſe; for the deſire of Moſes amounts only to a ſubmiſſion to a temporal death, that his nation might be ſaved from a temporal ruin. For the expreſſion of "blotting out of the book of life," is of the ſame importance with thoſe phraſes ſo frequently uſed in the old teſtament, of "blotting out from the face of "the earth," and "blotting out one's name from "under heaven," which ſignify no more than temporal death and deſtruction; and then Moſes's wiſh was reaſonable and generous, and ſignifies no more, but that he was willing, if GOD pleaſed, to die to ſave the nation.

As for St. Paul's wiſh, of "being accurſed from "CHRIST," it is plainly an hyperbolical expreſſion of his great affection to his country-men the Jews, and his zeal for their ſalvation, which was ſo great, that if it had been a thing reaſonable and lawful, he could have wiſhed the greateſt evil to himſelf for their ſakes;

ſakes; and therefore it is obſervable, that it is not a poſitive and abſolute wiſh, but expreſſed in the uſual form of uſhering in an hyperbole; I could wiſh, juſt as we are wont to ſay, when we would expreſs a thing to the height, which is not fit, nor intended to be done by us, I could wiſh ſo or ſo; I could even afford to do this or that; which kind of ſpeeches no man takes for a ſtrict and preciſe declaration of our minds, but for a figurative expreſſion of a great paſſion. SERM. LXVI.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing I propoſed for the explication of this precept, or duty of ſelf-denial, which was to remove ſome ſorts of ſelf-denial, which by ſome are frequently inſtanced in, as intended by our SAVIOUR in this precept, I proceed now to the

Second thing I propoſed, which is to declare poſitively, what that ſelf-denial is, which our SAVIOUR here intends; and 'tis plainly this, and nothing but this; that we ſhould be willing to part with all earthly comforts and conveniencies, to quit all our temporal intereſts and enjoyments, and even life itſelf, for the ſake of CHRIST and his religion; this our SAVIOUR means, by "denying our ſelves:" and then (which is much the ſame with the other) that we ſhould be willing to bear any temporal inconvenience and ſuffering upon the ſame account; this is "to take up our croſs and follow him."

And that this is the full meaning of theſe two phraſes, of "denying our ſelves," and "taking up "our croſs," will clearly appear, by conſidering the particular inſtances, which our SAVIOUR gives of this ſelf-denial, whenever he hath occaſion to ſpeak of it, by which you will plainly ſee, that theſe expreſſions amount to no more than I have ſaid. Even here in the text, after our SAVIOUR had told his diſciples, that "he that would come after him,

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" muſt deny himſelf, and take up his croſs;" it follows immediately, " for whoſoever will ſave his life, " ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever will loſe his life for " my ſake, ſhall find it." You ſee here, that he inſtanceth in parting with our lives for him, as the higheſt piece of ſelf-denial, which he requires. And he himſelf elſewhere tells us, " that greater love " than this hath no man, that a man lay down his " life for his friend." Elſewhere he inſtanceth in quitting our neareſt relations for his ſake, Luke xiv. 26, 27. " If any man come to me, and hate not his " father, and mother, and wife, and children, and " brethren, and ſiſters, yea and his own life alſo, he " cannot be my diſciple; and whoſoever doth not " bear his croſs and come after me, he cannot be " my diſciple."

Which expreſſions, of " hating father and mo- " ther, and other relations, and even life itſelf," are not to be underſtood rigorouſly, and in an abſolute ſenſe, but comparatively; for it is an Hebrew manner of ſpeech, to expreſs that abſolutely, which is meant only comparatively; and ſo our SAVIOUR explains himſelf in a parallel text to this, Matt. x. 37, 38. " He that loveth father and mother more than " me, is not worthy of me; he that loveth ſon or " daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; " and he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth " after me, is not worthy of me." In another place, our SAVIOUR inſtanceth in quitting our eſtates for his ſake, Matt. xix. 29. " Every one that ſhall for- " ſake houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or " mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my " names ſake;" by all which it appears that this ſelf-denial which our SAVIOUR here requires of his diſciples, is to be extended no farther, than to a readi-

neſs and willingneſs, whenever GOD ſhall call us to it, to quit all our temporal intereſts and enjoyments, and even life itſelf, the deareſt of all other, and to ſubmit to any temporal inconvenience and ſuffering for his ſake. And thus much for the explication of the precept here in the text. I proceed in the

III. Place, to conſider the ſtrict and indiſpenſable obligation of this precept of ſelf-denial, and ſuffering for CHRIST and his truth, rather than to forſake and renounce them, "if any man will come after me," or "be my diſciple, let him deny himſelf, and take "up his croſs and follow me;" that is, upon theſe terms he muſt be my diſciple, in this manner he muſt follow me; and in the text I mentioned before, he declares again, that he that is not ready to quit all his relations and even life itſelf, for his ſake, "is not "worthy of him, and cannot be his diſciple;" and "whoſoever doth not bear his croſs, and come after "him, cannot be his diſciple;" ſo that we cannot be the diſciples of CHRIST, nor be worthy to be called by his name, if we be not ready thus to deny ourſelves for his ſake: and not only ſo; but if for fear of the croſs, or of any temporal ſufferings, we ſhould renounce and deny him; he threatens "to deny us "before his Father which is in heaven," (i. e.) to deprive us of eternal life, and to ſentence us to everlaſting miſery, Matt. x. 32. "Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me "before men, him will I confeſs before my Father "which is in heaven: but whoſoever ſhall deny me "before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father "which is in heaven;" and Mark viii. 38. "Who-"ſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, "in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him "alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he "cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy "angels;"

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" angels;" that is, when he cometh to judge the world, they ſhall not be able to ſtand in that judgment; for that by his " being aſhamed of them," is meant, that they ſhall be condemned by him, is plain from what goes before, ver. 36, 37. " What " ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole " world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man " give in exchange for his ſoul?" and then it follows, " whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me " and of my words."

But becauſe ſome have the confidence to tell the world, that our SAVIOUR doth not require thus much of Chriſtians; but all that he obligeth us to, is to believe in him in our hearts, but not to make any outward profeſſion of his religion, when the magiſtrate forbids it, and we are in danger of ſuffering for it; I ſhall therefore briefly examine what is pretended for ſo ſtrange an aſſertion, and ſo directly contrary to the whole tenor of the goſpel, and to the expreſs words of our SAVIOUR.

The author of the book called the Leviathan tells us, that we are not only not bound to confeſs CHRIST, but we are obliged to deny him, in caſe the magiſtrate requireth us ſo to do. His words are theſe; " What if the ſovereign forbid us to believe in " CHRIST?" He anſwers, " ſuch forbidding is of " no effect, becauſe belief and unbelief never follow " mens commands. But what, (ſays he) if we be " commanded by our lawful prince to ſay with our " tongues, we believe not; muſt we obey ſuch com- " mands?" To this he anſwers, " that profeſſion " with the tongue is but an external thing, and no " more than any other geſture, whereby we ſignify " our obedience, and wherein a Chriſtian, holding " firmly in his heart the faith of CHRIST, hath the

" ſame

" ſame liberty which the prophet Eliſha allowed to ESR M.
" Naaman. But what then (ſays he) ſhall I anſwer LXVI.
" to our SAVIOUR," ſaying, " whoſoever denieth
" me before men, him will I deny before my Father
" which is in heaven?" His anſwer is, " That we
" may ſay, that whatſoever a ſubject is compelled to
" in obedience to his ſovereign, and does it not in
" order to his own mind, but the law of his coun-
" try, the action is not his, but his ſovereign's;
" nor is it he that in this caſe denies CHRIST be-
" fore men, but his governor, and the laws of his
" country."

But can any man, that in good earneſt pays any degree of reverence to our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his religion, think to baffle ſuch plain words by ſo frivolous an anſwer? There is no man doubts, but if the magiſtrate ſhould command men to deny CHRIST, he would be guilty of a great ſin in ſo doing: but if " we muſt obey GOD rather than men," and every man muſt " give an account of himſelf to GOD;" how will this excuſe him that denies CHRIST, or breaks any other commandment of GOD, upon the command of the magiſtrate? And to put the matter out of all doubt, that our SAVIOUR forbids all that will be his diſciples, upon pain of damnation, to deny him, though the magiſtrate ſhould command them to do ſo; it is very obſervable, that in that very place, where he ſpeaks of confeſſing or denying him before men, he puts this very caſe of their being brought before kings and governors for confeſſing him, Matt. x. 17. " Beware (ſays he) of
" men, for they will deliver you up to the councils,
" and they will ſcourge you in their ſynagogues;
" and ye ſhall be brought before governors and
" kings for my ſake, for a teſtimony againſt them

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" and the Gentiles." But what teſtimony would this be againſt them, if Chriſtians were bound to deny CHRIST at their command? But our SAVIOUR goes on, and tells them how they ought to demean themſelves, when they were brought before kings and governors, ver. 19. " But when they ſhall deli-
" ver you up, take ye no thought how, or what ye
" ſhall ſpeak; for it ſhall be given you in that very
" hour what ye ſhall ſpeak." But what need of any ſuch extraordinary aſſiſtance in the caſe, if they had nothing to do, but to deny him, when they were required by the magiſtrate to do it? And then (proceeding in the ſame diſcourſe) he bids them, ver. 28. " Not to fear them that can kill the body,
" and after that have no more that they can do:"
that is, not to deny him, for fear of any temporal puniſhment or ſuffering the magiſtrate could inflict upon them; " but to fear" and obey " him, who
" can deſtroy body and ſoul in hell." And upon this diſcourſe our SAVIOUR concludes, ver. 32, 33.
" Whoſoever therefore ſhall confeſs me before men,
" him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is
" in heaven: but whoſoever ſhall deny me before
" men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which
" is in heaven." And now can any thing be plainer, than that our SAVIOUR requires his diſciples to make confeſſion of him before kings and governors, and not to deny him for fear of any thing which they can do to them? But let us enquire a little farther, and ſee how the apoſtles, who received this precept from our SAVIOUR himſelf, did underſtand it. Acts iv. 18. we find Peter and John ſummoned before the Jewiſh magiſtrates, who " ſtrictly commanded them
" not to ſpeak at all, nor teach in the name of
" JESUS. But Peter and John anſwered and ſaid unto
" them

" them, whether it be right in the ſight of GOD, to SERM. LXVI.
" hearken unto you, more than unto GOD, judge
" ye." And when they ſtill perſiſted in their courſe, notwithſtanding the command of the magiſtrate, and were called again before the council, chap. v. 28. and " the high prieſt aſked them, ſaying, did we not " ſtraitly command you, that you ſhould not teach " in this name? and behold ye have filled Jeruſalem " with your doctrine;" they return them again the ſame anſwer, ver. 29. " Then Peter and the other " apoſtles anſwered and ſaid, we ought to obey GOD " rather than men."

And let any man now judge, whether our SAVIOUR did not oblige men to confeſs him even before magiſtrates, and to obey him rather than men. And indeed, how can any man in reaſon think, that the great king and governor of the world ſhould inveſt any man with a power to controul his authority, and to oblige men to diſobey, and renounce him, " by " whom kings reign, and princes decree judgment? This is a thing ſo unreaſonable, that it can hardly be imagined, that any thing but downright malice againſt GOD and religion could prompt any man to advance ſuch an aſſertion.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the fourth and laſt particular, which I propoſed to ſpeak to; namely, to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this precept of ſelf-denial and ſuffering for CHRIST, which at firſt appearance may ſeem to be ſo very harſh and difficult. But this, together with the application of this diſcourſe, ſhall be reſerved to another opportunity.

SERMON LXVII.

Of ſelf-denial and ſuffering for CHRIST's ſake.

MATTH. XVI. 24.

Then ſaid JESUS *unto his diſciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me.*

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The ſecond ſermon on this text.

"THEN ſaid JESUS to his diſciples," that is, upon occaſion of his former diſcourſe with them, concerning his approaching paſſion, and that he muſt ſhortly go up to Jeruſalem, and there ſuffer many things of the elders and chief prieſts and ſcribes, and at laſt be put to death by them; "then "ſaid JESUS unto his diſciples, if any man will come "after me;" that is, if any man will be my diſciple, and undertake the profeſſion of my religion; he muſt do it upon theſe terms of ſelf-denial and ſuffering.

In the handling of theſe words, I proceeded in this method.

Firſt, I conſidered the way which our SAVIOUR here uſeth in making proſelytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profeſſion of it; but fairly propoſeth it to their conſideration and choice, telling them plainly upon what terms they muſt be his diſciples; if they like them, and be reſolved to ſubmit to them, well; if not, 'tis in vain to follow him any longer; for they "cannot be his "diſciples." And to uſe any other way than this

to

to gain men over to religion, is contrary both to the nature of man, who is a reaſonable creature; and to the nature of religion, which, if it be not our free choice, cannot be religion. SERM. LXVII.

Secondly, I explained this duty or precept of ſelf-denial, expreſſed in theſe words, "let him deny him-"ſelf, and take up his croſs;" which phraſe of "taking up one's croſs," is an alluſion to the Roman cuſtom, which was, that the malefactor that was to be crucified, was to take up his croſs upon his ſhoulders, and to carry it to the place of execution.

Now for our clearer underſtanding of this precept of ſelf-denial, I told you, that it is not to be extended to every thing that may properly be called by that name, but to be limited by the plain ſcope and intendment of our SAVIOUR's diſcourſe; and therefore I did in the

Firſt place remove ſeveral things which are inſtanced in by ſome, as intended and required by this precept. As,

1. That we ſhould deny and renounce our own ſenſe in matters of faith. But this I ſhewed to be abſurd and impoſſible; becauſe if we do not believe what we ſee, or will believe contrary to what we ſee, we deſtroy all certainty, there being no greater than that of ſenſe. Beſides, that the evidence of faith being leſs clear and certain than that of ſenſe, it is contrary to the nature of aſſent, which is always ſwayed and borne down by the greateſt and cleareſt evidence. So that we cannot aſſent to any thing in plain contradiction to the evidence of ſenſe.

2. Others would comprehend under this precept, the denying of our reaſon in matters of faith; which is in the next degree of abſurdity to the other; becauſe no man can believe any thing, but upon ſome reaſon or

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other; and to believe without any reaſon, or againſt reaſon, is to make faith unreaſonable, and infidelity reaſonable.

3. Others pretend, that by virtue of this precept, men ought to be content to renounce their own eternal happineſs, and to be miſerable for ever, for the glory of GOD, and the ſalvation of their brethren. But this I ſhewed cannot be a duty, for this plain reaſon; becauſe if it were, there is no argument left powerful enough to perſuade a man to it. And as for the two ſcripture inſtances alledged to this purpoſe; Moſes his wiſh, of being "blotted out of the "book of life" for the people of Iſrael, ſignifies no more than a temporal death; and St. Paul's, of being "accurſed from CHRIST for his brethren," is only an hyperbolical expreſſion of his great paſſion and zeal for the ſalvation of his countrymen; as is evident from the form of the expreſſion, ſuch as is commonly uſed to uſher in an hyperbole; "I could "wiſh." And in the

Second place, I ſhewed poſitively, that the plain meaning of this precept of ſelf-denial is this, and nothing but this; that we ſhould be willing to part with all our temporal intereſts and enjoyments, and even life itſelf for the ſake of CHRIST and his religion. This is, "to deny ourſelves." And then, that we ſhould be willing to bear any temporal inconvenience and ſuffering upon the ſame account. This is "to "take up our croſs." And this I ſhewed from the inſtances which our SAVIOUR gives of ſelf-denial, whenever he had occaſion to diſcourſe of it.

Thirdly, I conſidered the ſtrict and indiſpenſable obligation of this precept of ſelf-denial, rather than to forſake CHRIST and his religion. Without this diſpoſition and reſolution of mind we "cannot be

"his

" his diſciples; and if we deny him before men; he " will alſo deny us before his Father which is in " heaven." And this confeſſion of him and his truth we are to make before kings and governors, and notwithſtanding their commands to the contrary, which are of no force againſt the laws and commands of GOD. SERM LXVII.

Thus far I have gone. There remains only the

Fourth and laſt particular, which I propoſed to ſpeak to; viz. to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this ſelf-denial and ſuffering for CHRIST, which at firſt appearance may ſeem to be ſo very difficult. And this precept cannot be thought unreaſonable, if we take into conſideration theſe three things.

I. That he, who requires this of us, hath himſelf given us the greateſt example of ſelf-denial that ever was. The greateſt in itſelf, in that he denied himſelf more, and ſuffered more grievous things, than it is poſſible for any of us to do: and ſuch an example as, in the circumſtances of it, is moſt apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it, becauſe all his ſelf-denial and ſufferings were for our ſakes.

II. If we conſider, that he hath promiſed all needful ſupplies of his grace, to enable us to the diſcharge of this difficult duty of ſelf-denial and ſuffering, and to ſupport and comfort us therein.

III. He hath aſſured us of a glorious reward of all our ſufferings and ſelf-denial, beyond the proportion of them, both in the degree and duration of it. I ſhall go over theſe as briefly as I can.

I. If we conſider, that he, who requires us thus to deny ourſelves for him, hath given us the greateſt example of ſelf-denial that ever was. Our SAVIOUR knowing how unwelcome this doctrine of ſelf-denial

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and ſuffering muſt needs be to his diſciples, and how hardly this precept would go down with them, to ſweeten it a little, and take off the harſhneſs of it, and to prepare their minds the better for it, he tells them firſt of his own ſufferings, that by that means he might, in ſome meaſure, reconcile their minds to it, when they ſaw that he required nothing of them but what he was ready to undergo himſelf, and to give them the example of it. And upon this occaſion it was, that our SAVIOUR acquaints them with the hard and difficult terms upon which they muſt be his diſciples: ver. 21. the evangeliſt tells us, that "JESUS began to ſhew unto his diſciples, how that "he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things "of the elders, and chief prieſts, and ſcribes, and "be killed. Then ſaid JESUS unto his diſciples," that is, immediately upon this diſcourſe of his own ſufferings, as the fitteſt time for it, he takes the opportunity to tell them plainly of their own ſufferings, and that unleſs they were prepared and reſolved to deny themſelves ſo far, as to ſuffer all manner of perſecution for his ſake and the profeſſion of his religion, they could not be his diſciples. "If any man will "come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up "his croſs, and follow me," that is, let him reckon and reſolve upon following that example of ſelf-denial and ſuffering in which I will go before him. Now the conſideration of this example of ſelf-denial and ſuffering, which our SAVIOUR hath given us, hath great force in it to reconcile us to this difficult duty, and to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of it.

1. In that he, who requires us thus to deny ourſelves, hath himſelf in his own perſon, given us the greateſt example of ſelf-denial that ever was. And,

2. Such

2. Such an example as, in all the circumſtances of it, is moſt apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; becauſe all his ſelf-denial and ſufferings were for our ſakes.

1. He, who requires us thus to deny ourſelves, hath himſelf in his own perſon given us the greateſt example of ſelf-denial that ever was; in that he denied himſelf more, and ſuffered more grievous things, than any of us can do. He bore the inſupportable load of all the ſins of mankind, and of the wrath and vengeance due to them. "Never was ſorrow "like to his ſorrow, wherewith the LORD afflicted "him in the day of his fierce anger. He was de- "ſpiſed and rejected of men; a man of ſorrows, and "acquainted with grief; his viſage was marred "more than any man's, and his form more than the "ſons of men." (i. e.) He underwent more affliction, and had more contempt poured upon him, than ever was upon any of the ſons of men: and yet he endured all this with incredible patience and meekneſs, with the greateſt evenneſs and conſtancy of mind, and with the moſt perfect ſubmiſſion and reſignation of himſelf to the will of GOD, that can be imagined.

Such an example as this ſhould be of great force to animate us with the like courage and reſolution, in leſſer dangers and difficulties. To ſee "the cap- "tain of our ſalvation" going before us, and leading us on ſo bravely, and "made perfect by" greater "ſufferings" than we can ever be called to, or are any ways able to undergo, is no ſmall argument and encouragement to us, to "take up our croſs and "follow him." The conſideration of the unknown ſufferings of the Son of GOD, ſo great as we cannot well conceive of them, ſhould make all the afflictions and ſufferings that can befal us, not only tolerable, but

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but eaſy to us. Upon this conſideration it is, that the apoſtle animates Chriſtians to patience in their chriſtian courſe, notwithſtanding all the hardſhips and ſufferings that attended it, Heb. xii. 2. "Let us "run with patience the race which is ſet before us, "looking unto JESUS the author and finiſher of our "faith, who endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the "ſhame. For conſider him, who endured ſuch con-"tradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf, leſt ye alſo "be weary and faint in your minds."

And this example is more powerful for our encouragement, becauſe therein we ſee the world conquered to our hands, and all the terrors and temptations of it baffled and ſubdued, and thereby a cheap and eaſy victory over it obtained for us. By this conſideration, our SAVIOUR endeavours to inſpire his diſciples with chearfulneſs and courage in this great conflict, John xvi. 33. "In the world ye ſhall have tribulation: "but be of good chear, I have overcome the world."

2. This example of our SAVIOUR is ſuch as, in all the circumſtances of it, is moſt apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; becauſe all his ſelf-denial and ſufferings were for our ſakes in pity and kindneſs to us, and wholly for our benefit and advantage. We are apt to have their example in great regard, from whom we have received great kindneſs and mighty benefits. This pattern of ſelf-denial and ſuffering, which our religion propoſeth to us, is the example of one, whom we have reaſon to eſteem, and love, and imitate, above any perſon in the world. It is the example of our LORD and maſter, of our ſovereign and our SAVIOUR, of the founder of our religion, and of "the author and fi-"niſher of our faith:" and ſurely ſuch an example muſt needs carry authority with it, and command our imitation.

imitation. It is the example of our beſt friend, and greateſt benefactor; of him, who laid down his life for us, and ſealed his love to us with his deareſt blood, and even when we were bitter enemies to him, did, and ſuffered more for us, than any man ever did for his beſt friend. If we ſhould be reduced to poverty and want, let us conſider him, "who being "LORD of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we "through his poverty might be made rich." If it ſhould be our lot to "be perſecuted for righteouſneſs "ſake," and exerciſed with ſufferings and reproaches; let us "look unto JESUS the author and finiſher of "our faith who endured the croſs and deſpiſed the "ſhame" for our ſakes. In a word, can we be diſcontented at any condition, or decline it in a good cauſe; when we conſider how contented the Son of GOD was, in the meaneſt and moſt deſtitute; how meek and patient in the moſt afflicted and ſuffering condition; how he welcomed all events, and was ſo perfectly reſigned to the will of his heavenly Father, that whatever pleaſed GOD, pleaſed him? SERM. LXVII.

And ſurely in no caſe is example more neceſſary than in this, to engage and encourage us in the diſcharge of ſo difficult a duty, ſo contrary to the bent and inclination of fleſh and blood. A bare precept of ſelf-denial, and a peremptory command to ſacrifice our own wills, our eaſe, our pleaſure, our reputation, yea, and life itſelf, to the glory of GOD, and the maintenance of his truth, would have ſounded very harſh and ſevere, had not the practice of all this been mollified and ſweetned by a pattern of ſo much advantage; by one who in all theſe reſpects denied himſelf, much more than it is poſſible for us to do; by one who might have inſiſted upon a greater right, who abaſed

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abaſed himſelf, and ſtooped from a greater height and dignity; who was not forced into a condition of meanneſs and poverty, but choſe it for our ſakes; who ſubmitted to ſuffering, though he had never deſerved it. Here is an example that hath all the argument, and all the encouragement that can be, to the imitation of it.

Such an example is of greater force and authority than any precept or law can be; ſo that well might our LORD, thus going before us, command us to follow him, and ſay, "if any man will come after "me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs "and follow me." For if he thus denied himſelf, well may we, who have much leſs to deny, but much more cauſe and reaſon to do it. He did it voluntarily, and of choice; but it is our duty. He did it for our ſakes, we do it for our own. His own goodneſs moved him to deny himſelf for us; but gratitude obligeth us to deny ourſelves in any thing for him. We did not in the leaſt deſerve any thing from him; but he hath wholly merited all this, and infinitely more from us. So that ſuch an example as this is, in all the circumſtances of it, cannot but be very powerful and effectual to oblige us to the imitation of it. But the reaſonableneſs of this precept will yet farther appear, if we conſider in the

Third place, that GOD hath promiſed to all ſincere Chriſtians all needful ſupplies of his grace, to enable them to the diſcharge of this difficult duty of ſelf-denial, and to ſupport and comfort them therein. For the ſpirit of CHRIST dwells in all Chriſtians, and the ſame glorious power that raiſed up JESUS from the dead, works mightily in them that believe; Eph. i. 19. "That ye may know," (ſaith St. Paul, ſpeaking in general to all Chriſtians) "what is the exceed-

"ing

" ing greatneſs of his power to us-ward, who be- SERM.
" lieve, according to the working of his mighty LXVII.
" power which he wrought in CHRIST, when he
" raiſed him from the dead." Of our ſelves we are very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world very powerful; but there is a principle reſiding in every true Chriſtian, able to bear us up againſt the world, and the power of all its temptations. " Whatſoever is born of GOD" (ſaith St. John) " overcometh the world; and this is the vic-
" tory that overcometh the world, even our faith.
" Ye are of GOD, little children, and have over-
" come; becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

And this grace and ſtrength was afforded to the firſt Chriſtians in a moſt extraordinary manner, for their comfort and ſupport under ſufferings; ſo that they were " ſtrengthened with all might, according
" to GOD's glorious power, unto all long ſuffering
" with joyfulneſs," as St. Paul prays for the Coloſſians, ch. i. 11. And theſe " conſolations of the ſpi-
" rit of GOD," this " joy in the Holy Ghoſt," was not peculiarly appropriated in the firſt times of chriſtianity; but is ſtill afforded to all ſincere Chriſtians, in ſuch degree as is neceſſary, and convenient for them. And whenever GOD exerciſeth good men with trials more than human, and ſuch ſufferings as are beyond the ordinary rate of human ſtrength and patience to bear, he hath promiſed to endue them with more than human courage and reſolution. So St. Paul tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. x. 13. " He
" is faithful that hath promiſed, who will not ſuffer
" you to be tempted above what ye are able, but
" will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape,
" that ye may be able to bear it." And why ſhould

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we be daunted at any ſuffering; if GOD be pleaſed to encreaſe our ſtrength, in proportion to the ſharpneſs of our ſufferings?

And bleſſed be GOD many of our perſecuted brethren at this day have remarkably found this comfortable aſſiſtance and ſupport; though many likewiſe have fallen through fear and weakneſs; as it alſo happened in the primitive times. But where-ever this promiſe is not made good, it is, (as I have formerly ſaid) by reaſon of ſome fault and failing on our part. Either men were not ſincere in the profeſſion of the truth, and then no wonder, if "when tribu-"lation and perſecution ariſeth, becauſe of the word, "they are offended and fall off." Or elſe they were too confident of themſelves, and did not ſeek GOD's grace and aſſiſtance, and rely upon him as they ought; and thereupon GOD hath left them to themſelves (as he did Peter) to convince them of their own frailty and raſh confidence; and yet even in that caſe, when there is truth and ſincerity at the bottom, there is no reaſon to doubt, but that the goodneſs of GOD is ſuch, as by ſome means or other to give to ſuch perſons (as he did to Peter) the opportunity of recovering themſelves by repentance, and a more ſtedfaſt reſolution afterwards.

Fourthly, if we conſider in the laſt place, that our SAVIOUR hath aſſured us of a glorious and eternal reward of all our ſelf-denial and ſufferings for him; a reward infinitely beyond the proportion of our ſufferings, both in the degree and duration of it. Now the clear diſcovery of this is peculiarly owing to the chriſtian religion, and "the appearance of our LORD "and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath aboliſhed "death, and brought life and immortality to light "by the goſpel."

And

And as our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath aſſured us of this bleſſed ſtate of good men in another world; ſo hath he likewiſe aſſured us, that greater degrees of this happineſs ſhall be the portion of thoſe who ſuffer for him and his truth, Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. "Bleſ- "ſed are they which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs "ſake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Bleſ- "ſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſe- "cute you, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt you "falſly, for my name's ſake. Rejoice and be ex- "ceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." And nothing ſurely can be more reaſonable, than to part with things of ſmall value, for things of infinitely greater and more conſiderable; to forego the tranſient pleaſures and enjoyments, and the imperfect felicities of this world, for the ſolid, and perfect, and perpetual happineſs of a better life; and to exchange a ſhort and miſerable life, for eternal life and bleſſedneſs; in a word, to be content to be driven home, to be baniſhed out of this world into our own native country, and to be violently thruſt out of this "vale "of tears," into thoſe regions of bliſs, where are "joys unſpeakable and full of glory." SERM. LXVII.

This conſideration St. Paul tells us ſupported the primitive Chriſtians, under their ſharpeſt and heavieſt ſufferings, 2 Cor. iv. 16. "For this cauſe" (ſays he) "we faint not, becauſe our light affliction, which is "but for a moment, worketh for us a far more ex- "ceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilſt we "look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the "things which are not ſeen; for the things which "are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not "ſeen are eternal." So that our ſufferings bear no more proportion to the reward of them, than finite does to infinite, than temporal to eternal, between which there is no proportion.

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All that now remains, is to draw ſome uſeful inferences from what hath been diſcourſed, concerning this great and difficult duty of ſelf-denial for the ſake of CHRIST and his religion; and they ſhall be theſe following.

I. To acknowledge the great goodneſs of GOD to us, that all theſe laws and commands, even the hardeſt and ſevereſt of them, are ſo reaſonable.

GOD, as he is our maker, and gave us our beings, hath an entire and ſovereign right over us, and by virtue of that right, might have impoſed very hard things upon us, and this without the giving account to us of any of his matters, and without propounding any reward to us, ſo vaſtly diſproportionable to our obedience to him. But in giving laws to us, he hath not made uſe of this right. The moſt ſevere and rigorous commands of the goſpel are ſuch, that we ſhall be infinitely gainers by our obedience to them. If we deny our ſelves any thing in this world for CHRIST and his religion, we ſhall in the next, be conſidered for it to the utmoſt, not only far beyond what it can deſerve, but beyond what we can conceive or imagine; for this periſhing life, and the tranſitory trifles and enjoyments of it, we ſhall receive "a kingdom which cannot be ſhaken, an in-"corruptible crown which fadeth not away, eternal "in the heavens." For theſe are faithful ſayings, and we ſhall infallibly find them true, "if that we "ſuffer with CHRIST, we ſhall alſo reign with him; "if we be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, great "ſhall be our reward in heaven;" if we part with our temporal life, we ſhall be made partakers of eternal life. He that is firmly perſuaded of the happineſs of the next world, and believes "the glory which "ſhall then be revealed," hath no reaſon to be ſo much

much offended at the ſufferings of this preſent time, ſo long as he knows and believes, that "theſe light "afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work "for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight "of glory." SERM. LXVII.

II. Seeing this is required of every Chriſtian, to be always in a preparation and diſpoſition of mind to deny ourſelves, and to take up our croſs; if we do in good earneſt reſolve to be Chriſtians, we ought to ſit down and conſider well with ourſelves, what our religion will coſt us, and whether we be content to come up to the price of it. If we value any thing in this world above CHRIST and his truth, "we are "not worthy of him." If it come to this, that we muſt either renounce him and his religion, or quit our temporal intereſts; if we be not ready to forego theſe, nay, and to part even with life itſelf, rather than to forſake him and his truth; "we are not "worthy of him." Theſe are the terms of our chriſtianity, and therefore we are required in baptiſm ſolemnly to renounce the world: and our SAVIOUR, from this very conſideration, infers, that all who take upon them the profeſſion of his religion, ſhould conſider ſeriouſly beforehand, and count the coſt of it, Luke xiv. 28. "Which of you (ſays he) intend-"ing to build a tower, ſitteth not down firſt, and "counteth the coſt, whether he have ſufficient to "finiſh it? Or what king going to war with another "king, doth not ſit down and conſult, whether with "ten thouſand he be able to meet him that cometh "againſt him with twenty thouſand? So likewiſe, "whoſoever he be that forſaketh not all he hath, "cannot be my diſciple." You ſee the terms upon which we are Chriſtians; we muſt always be prepared in the reſolution of our minds to deny our-

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ſelves, and take up our croſs, though we are not actually put upon this trial.

III. What hath been ſaid is matter of great comfort and encouragement to all thoſe who deny themſelves, and ſuffer upon ſo good an account: of whom, GOD knows, there are too great a number at this day, in ſeveral parts of the world; ſome under actual ſufferings, ſuch as cannot but move compaſſion and horror in all that hear of them; others who are fled hither, and into other countries, for refuge and ſhelter from one of the ſharpeſt perſecutions that perhaps ever was, if all the circumſtances of it be duly conſidered. But not to enlarge upon ſo unpleaſant a theme, they who ſuffer for the truth and righteouſneſs ſake, have all the comfort and encouragement, that the beſt example, and the greateſt and moſt glorious promiſes of GOD can give. They have the beſt example in their view, "JESUS, the "author and finiſher of their faith, who endured "the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame." So that how great and terrible ſoever their ſufferings be, they do but tread in the ſteps of the Son of GOD, and of the beſt and holieſt man that ever was; and he, who is their great example in ſuffering, will likewiſe be their ſupport, and "their exceeding great reward."

So that though ſuffering for CHRIST be accounted great ſelf-denial, and he is graciouſly pleaſed ſo to accept it, becauſe in denying things preſent and ſenſible, for things future and inviſible, we do not only declare our affection to him, but our great faith and confidence in him, by ſhewing that we rely upon his word, and venture all upon the ſecurity which he offers us in another world; yet according to a right eſtimate of things, and to thoſe who "walk by faith and not by ſight," this which

we call ſelf-denial, is, in truth and reality, but a more commendable ſort of ſelf-love, becauſe we do herein moſt effectually conſult, and ſecure, and advance our own happineſs. SERM. LXVII.

IV. And laſtly, ſince GOD hath been pleaſed for ſo long a time to excuſe us from this hardeſt part of ſelf-denial, let us not grudge to deny ourſelves in leſſer matters, for the ſake of his truth and religion; to miſs a good place, or to quit it upon that account; much leſs let us think much to renounce our vices, and to thwart our evil inclinations for his ſake. As Naaman's ſervant ſaid to him, concerning the means preſcribed by the prophet for his cure, "if he had bid thee do ſome great thing, wouldeſt "thou not have done it? How much more, when "he hath only ſaid, waſh and be clean?" So ſince GOD impoſeth no harder terms upon us, than repentance and reformation of our lives, we ſhould readily and thankfully ſubmit to them.

This, I know, is difficult to ſome, to "mortify "their earthly members," to "crucify the fleſh, "with the affections and luſts of it;" 'tis like "cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right "eye." Some are ſo ſtrongly addicted to their luſts and vices, that they could with more eaſe deſpiſe life in many caſes, than thus deny themſelves. But in truth, there is no more of ſelf-denial in it, than a man denies himſelf when he is mortally ſick and wounded, in being content to be cured, and willing to be well. This is not at all to our temporal prejudice and inconvenience, and it directly conduceth to our eternal happineſs; for there is no man that lives a holy and virtuous life, and in obedience to the laws of GOD, that can lightly receive any prejudice by it in this world. Since GOD doth not call

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us to ſuffer, we ſhould do ſo much the more for him. Since he doth not put us to teſtify our love to him, by laying down our lives for him, we ſhould ſhew it by a greater care to keep his commandments.

God was pleaſed to exerciſe the firſt Chriſtians with great ſufferings, and to try their love and conſtancy to him and his truth, in a very extraordinary manner, by ſeverity and contempt, by "the ſpoiling "of their goods," and "the loſs of all things; by "bonds and impriſonments; by cruel mockings and "ſcourgings;" by the extremity of torments, and by "reſiſting even unto blood; by being killed for "his ſake all the day long, and appointed as ſheep "for the ſlaughter." God was pleaſed to make their way to heaven very ſharp and painful, and to "hedge it in," as it were, "with thorns on every "ſide," ſo that they could not, but "through "many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of "heaven."

Thus we ought all to be in readineſs and reſolution to ſubmit to this duty, if God ſhould think fit at any time of our lives to call us to it. But if he be pleaſed to excuſe us from it, and "to let this "cup paſs from us," (which may lawfully be our earneſt prayer to God, ſince we have ſo good a pattern for it) there will be another duty incumbent upon us, which will take up the whole man, and the whole time of our life, and that is "to ſerve "him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs "before him all the days of our lives."

SER-

SERMON LXVIII.

Preach'd at WHITEHALL before the family, Nov. 1, 1686.

Good men ſtrangers and ſojourners upon earth.

HEB. XI. 13.

And confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The whole verſe runs thus;

Theſe all died in faith, not having received the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

SERM. LXVIII. The firſt ſermon on this text.

THE apoſtle having declared at the latter end of the foregoing chapter, that faith is the great principle whereby good men are acted, and whereby they are ſupported under all the evils and ſufferings of this life, verſe 38. "Now the juſt ſhall "live by faith;" in this chapter he makes it his main buſineſs, to ſet forth to us at large the force and power of faith; and to this purpoſe, he firſt tells us what kind of faith he means; viz. a firm perſuaſion of things not preſent and viſible to ſenſe, but inviſible and future; ver. 1. "Now faith (ſaith he) is the

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" confident expectation of things hoped for, and the " evidence of things not ſeen." Faith repreſents to us the reality of things which are inviſible to ſenſe, as the exiſtence of God and his providence; and of things which are at a great diſtance from us, as the future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments in another world.

And then he proceeds to ſhew, by particular and famous inſtances, that the firm belief and perſuaſion of theſe things, was the great principle of the piety and virtue of the ſaints and of good men in all ages of the world; by this Abel and Enoch and Noah; Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob; Joſeph and Moſes, and all the famous heroes of the old teſtament " ob- " tained a good report," and " pleaſed GOD," and did all thoſe eminent acts of obedience and ſelf-denial which are recorded of them. They " believed " the being of GOD, and that he is a rewarder of " them that diligently ſeek him." They dreaded his threatnings, and relied upon his promiſes of future and inviſible good things. They lived and died in a full perſuaſion and confidence of the truth of them; though they did not live to ſee them actually fulfilled and accompliſhed. " All theſe" (ſaith he, ſpeaking of thoſe eminent ſaints which he had inſtanced in before) " died in faith, not having re- " ceived the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar " off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced " them. This is ſpoken with a more particular regard to Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, to whom the promiſes of the conqueſt and poſſeſſion of a fruitful land were made, and of a numerous offſpring, among whom ſhould be the Meſſias, in whom all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.

Theſe

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Theſe promiſes they did not live to ſee accompliſh'd and made good in their days; but they heartily believed them, and rejoiced in the hope and expectation of them, as if they had embraced them in their arms, and been put into the actual poſſeſſion of them: "and they confeſſed, that they were pilgrims "and ſtrangers on the earth."

This ſaying and acknowledgment more particularly and immediately refers to thoſe ſayings of the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, which we find recorded, Gen. xxiii. 4. where Abraham ſays to the ſons of Heth, "I am a ſtranger and a ſojourner with you;" and Gen. xlvii. 9. where Jacob ſays to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage "are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil "have the days of the years of my life been." Theſe good men were "ſtrangers and ſojourners" in a land, which was promiſed to be theirs afterwards. They dwelt in it themſelves as ſtrangers, but were in expectation that it would one day become the inheritance of their poſterity.

Now in this, as by a type and ſhadow, the apoſtle repreſents to us the condition of good men, while they are paſſing through this world. They are "pilgrims and ſtrangers on the earth;" they travel up and down the world for a time, as the patriarchs did in the land of Canaan; but are in expectation of a better and more ſettled condition hereafter; "they "deſire a better country," that is, an heavenly, ſays the apoſtle at the 16th verſe of this chapter.

That which I deſign from theſe words is to repreſent to us our preſent condition in this world, and to awaken us to a due ſenſe and ſerious conſideration of it. It is the ſame condition, that all the ſaints and holy men that are gone before us were in, in this

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world, and every one of us may ſay with David, Pſal. xxxix. 12. "I am a ſtranger with thee, and a "ſojourner, as all my fathers were." It is a condition very troubleſom and very unſettled, ſuch as that of "pilgrims and ſtrangers" uſeth to be. This we muſt all acknowledge, if we judge rightly of our preſent ſtate and condition. "They confeſſed, that "they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth:" but yet it was not without the hope and expectation of a better and happier condition in reverſion. So it follows juſt after; "they that ſay ſuch things," (that is, "that confeſs themſelves to be ſtrangers and pil-"grims on the earth) declare plainly, that they ſeek "a country." This bore up the patriarchs under all the evils and troubles of their pilgrimage, that they expected an inheritance, and a quiet and ſettled poſſeſſion of that good land which GOD had promiſed to them. Anſwerably to which, good men do expect, after "the few and evil days of their pilgri-"mage" in this world are over, a bleſſed inheritance in "a better country," that is, "an heavenly;" and with bleſſed Abraham, the father of the faithful, they "look for a city which hath foundations, whoſe "builder and maker is GOD," as it is ſaid of that good patriarch at the tenth verſe of this chapter.

It is very frequent, not only in ſcripture, but in other authors, to repreſent our condition in this world, by that of pilgrims and ſojourners in a foreign country: for the mind which is the man, and our immortal ſouls, which are by far the moſt noble and excellent part of ourſelves, are the natives of heaven, and but "pilgrims and ſtrangers" here on the earth; and when the days of our pilgrimage ſhall be over, are deſigned to return to that heavenly country from which they came, and to which they belong. And there-

therefore the apoſtle tells us, Phil. iii. 20. that Chriſtians have relation to heaven as their native place and country, ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, "our converſation is in heaven," ſo we render the words; but they properly ſignify, that Chriſtians are members of that city and ſociety which is above; and though they converſe at preſent here below, while they are paſſing through this world, yet heaven is the country to which they do belong, and whither they are continually tending, *ſedes ubi fata quietas oſtendunt*, where a quiet habitation, and a perpetual reſt is deſigned and prepared for them. This acknowledgment David makes concerning himſelf, and all the people of GOD, 1 Chron. xxix. 15. "For we are ſtrangers before thee, and ſojourners, "as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth "are as a ſhadow, and there is none abiding." So likewiſe St. Peter, 1 Pet. i. 17. "Paſs the time of "your ſojourning here in fear;" and chap. ii. ver. 11. "Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as ſtrangers "and pilgrims abſtain from fleſhly luſts." SERM. LXVIII.

And not only the inſpired writers of holy ſcripture, but heathen authors, do frequently make uſe of this alluſion. Plato tells us, it was a common ſaying, and almoſt in every man's mouth, παρεπιδημία τις ἐστὶν ὁ βίος, the life of man is a kind of pilgrimage. And Tully, in his excellent diſcourſe *de ſenectute*, (concerning old age) brings in Cato deſcribing our paſſage out of this world, not as a departure from our home, but like a man leaving his inn, in which he hath lodged for a night or two, *ex vita iſta diſcedo, tanquam ex hoſpitio, non tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diverſorium nobis, non habitandi dedit:* "When I leave this world (ſays he) I look upon my "ſelf as departing out of an inn, and not as quitting "mine

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" mine own home and habitation; nature having " aſſigned this world to us as a place to ſojourn, but " not to dwell in." Which is the ſame with what the apoſtle ſays in the text, concerning the patriarchs, " they confeſſed that they were pilgrims and ſtran- " gers on the earth;" and concerning all Chriſtians, chap. xiii. 14. " Here we have no continuing city; " but we ſeek one to come."

But I do not intend to follow the metaphor too cloſe, and to vex and torture it, by purſuing all thoſe little parallels and ſimilitudes, which a lively fancy might make or find, betwixt the condition of ſtrangers and pilgrims, and the life of man during his abode and paſſage through this world. I will inſiſt only upon two things, which ſeem plainly to be deſigned and intended by this metaphor, and they are theſe;

I. That our condition in this world is very troubleſom and unſettled; " they confeſſed that they " were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth."

II. It implies a tendency to a future ſettling, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we ſhall enter when we go out of this world. For ſo it follows in the very next words after the text; " they confeſſed that they were " ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth: for they that " ſay ſuch things, declare plainly, that they ſeek a " country. They that ſay ſuch things;" that is, they that acknowledge themſelves to have lived in ſuch a reſtleſs and uncertain condition in this world, travelling from one place to another, as the patriarchs Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob did, and yet pretend to be perſuaded of the goodneſs of GOD, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſe, in which he ſolemnly declared himſelf to be their GOD, do hereby plainly ſhew,

ſhew, that they expect ſome happier condition here- SERM. after, wherein that great promiſe of God will be LXVIII. made good to them to the full.

And theſe are two very weighty and uſeful conſiderations, that we ſhould both underſtand our preſent condition in this world, and our future hope and expectation after our departure out of it, that ſo we may demean ourſelves ſuitably to both theſe conditions; both as it is fit for thoſe who look upon themſelves "as pilgrims and ſojourners" in this world, and likewiſe, as it becomes thoſe who "ſeek and "expect a better country," and hope to be made partakers of a bleſſed immortality in another world. I ſhall briefly ſpeak to both theſe; and then ſhew what effect and influence the ſerious meditation of theſe two points ought to have upon every one of us.

I. That our condition in this world is very troubleſom and unſettled. This I take to be principally intended in the metaphor of "ſtrangers and pilgrims." Such was the life of the patriarchs, which is here ſpoken of in the text; they had no conſtant abode and fixt habitation, but were continually wandering from one kingdom and country to another; in which travels they were expoſed to a great many hazards and dangers, afflictions and miſeries, affronts and injuries, as we read at large in the hiſtory of their travels in the old teſtament. And ſuch is our condition in this world; it is often troubleſom, and always uncertain and unſettled.

It is often very troubleſom. Not to inſiſt upon the weak condition of infancy and childhood, the helpleſneſs of that ſtate, and inſufficiency of it for it's own preſervation, and the ſupply of its natural wants and neceſſities; not to mention the dangerous vanity and deſperate folly of youth, nor the infirmities and

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contempts, the many tedious and wearisom days and nights that old age is commonly grieved and afflicted withal, to that degree, as to make life not only unpleaſant, but almoſt an intolerable burden to us. Not to dwell upon theſe, which yet take up and poſſeſs a great ſhare and portion of our lives: if we look upon man in his beſt ſtate, we ſhall find him, as David hath long ſince pronounced on him, to be "altoge-"ther vanity." We need not go a pilgrimage, and travel into remote countries, to make life more troubleſom and uneaſy. In what part of the world ſoever we are, even that which we improperly call our own home and native country, we ſhall meet with trouble and inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but ſtrangers in it. More eſpecially good men are peculiarly liable to a great many evils and ſufferings upon account of their piety and virtue. "They are not of the world" (as our bleſſed SAVIOUR tells his diſciples, John xv. 19.) and "be-"cauſe they are not of the world, therefore the "world hateth them," and taketh all opportunities and occaſions to vex and perſecute them in one kind or other, either by doing all manner of evil to them, or by ſpeaking all manner of evil of them.

But ſuppoſe we eſcape trouble upon this account; there are abundance of common and natural inconveniencies, which render human life very uneaſy. For either we muſt live alone, or in the company and ſociety of others: one of theſe two is neceſſary and unavoidable. Suppoſe we would live alone; how few are there that can enjoy themſelves tolerably alone for any conſiderable time? For though there be a great deal too much of ſelf-love in mankind, and men are generally extremely fond of themſelves; yet I know not how it happens, (though ſo it is) that very few

few men in the world care for their own company, or can endure, for any conſiderable time, to converſe only with themſelves; nay, for the moſt part, they are ſooner glutted with themſelves, and ſurfeited of their own converſation, than with the worſt company they can meet with; a ſhrewd ſign, as one would think, that they knew ſomething worſe by themſelves than of any body elſe, or at leaſt they know it more certainly. It is a wiſe and deep ſaying of Ariſtotle, "whoever affects to be alone, muſt be ἢ θεὸς. ἢ "θηρίον, either a GOD or a wild beaſt;" either he muſt be ſufficient for himſelf, and want nothing; or of ſo wild and ſavage a diſpoſition, as to deſtroy every thing that is weaker, and to run away from every thing that is ſtronger than himſelf. Now man is neither good enough to be contented and ſatisfied with himſelf, nor bad enough to hate and avoid every body elſe; and therefore he muſt enter into ſociety, and keep company with other men. SERM. LXVIII.

And if we go abroad into the world, and try the converſation of men, it cannot but grieve us to ſee a great many things, which yet we muſt ſee every day; the cenſoriouſneſs, and uncharitableneſs, and inſincerity of men one towards another; to ſee with what kindneſs they will treat one another to the face, and how hardly they will uſe them behind their backs. If there were nothing elſe, this one naughty quality, ſo common and reigning among mankind, were enough to make an honeſt and true hearted man, one that loves plainneſs and ſincerity, to be heartily ſick of the world, and glad to ſteal off the ſtage, where there is nothing native and ſincere, but all perſonated and acted; where the converſation of a great part of men is all deſigning and inſidious, full of flattery and falſhood, of good words and ill offices: "one ſpeak-

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" eth peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but " in his heart he lieth in wait," as it is in the prophet, Jer, ix. 8. And when a man hath done all the good turns he can, and endeavoured to oblige every man, and not only to live inoffenſively, but exemplarily; he is fairly dealt withal, and comes off upon good terms, if he can but eſcape the ill words of men for doing well, and obtain a pardon for thoſe things which truly deſerve praiſe.

But ſetting aſide theſe, and the like melancholy conſiderations; when we are in the health and vigour of our age, when our blood is warm, and our ſpirits quick, and the humours of our body not yet turned and ſoured by great diſappointments, and grievous loſſes of our eſtates, or neareſt friends and relations, by a long courſe of afflictions, by many croſs events and calamitous accidents; yet we are continually liable to all theſe: and the perpetual fear and danger of them is no ſmall trouble and uneaſineſs to our minds, and does in a great meaſure rob us of the comfort, and eat out the pleaſure and ſweetneſs of all our enjoyments; and, by degrees, the evils we fear overtake us; and as one affliction and trouble goes off, another ſucceeds in the place of it, like Job's meſſengers, whoſe bad tidings and reports of calamitous accidents came ſo thick upon him, that they overtook one another.

If we have a plentiful fortune, we are apt to abuſe it to intemperance and luxury; and this naturally breeds bodily pains and diſeaſes, which take away all the comfort and enjoyment of a great eſtate. If we have health, it may be we are afflicted with loſſes, or deprived of friends, or croſſed in our intereſts and deſigns, and one thing or other happens to impede or interrupt the contentment and happineſs of our lives,

lives. Sometimes an unexpected ſtorm, or ſome other ſudden calamity, ſweepeth away, in an inſtant, all that which with ſo much induſtry and care we have been gathering many years. Or if an eſtate ſtand firm, our children are taken away, to whoſe comfort and advantage all the pains and endeavours of our lives were devoted. Or if none of theſe happen, (as it is very rare to eſcape moſt, or ſome of them) yet for a demonſtration to us that GOD intended this world to be uneaſy, to convince us that a perfect ſtate of happineſs is not to be had here below, we often ſee in experience, that thoſe who ſeem to be in a condition as happy as this world can put them into, by the greateſt accommodations towards it, are yet as far or farther from happineſs, as thoſe who are deſtitute of moſt of thoſe things wherein the greateſt felicity of this world is thought to conſiſt. Many times it ſo happens, that they who have all the furniture and requiſites, all the materials and ingredients of a worldly felicity at their command, and in their power, yet have not the ſkill and ability out of all theſe to frame a happy condition of life to themſelves. They have health, and friends, and reputation, and eſtate in abundance, and all outward accommodations that heart can wiſh; and yet in the midſt of all theſe circumſtances of outward felicity, they are uneaſy in their minds, and as the wiſe man expreſſeth it, "in "their ſufficiency they are in ſtreights," and are as it were ſurfeited even with happineſs itſelf, and do ſo fantaſtically and unaccountably nauſeate the good condition they are in, that though they want nothing to make them happy, yet they cannot think themſelves ſo; though they have nothing in the world to moleſt and diſguſt them, yet they can make a ſhift to create as much trouble to themſelves out of nothing, as

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as they who have the real and ſubſtantial cauſes of diſcontent.

Which plainly ſhews, that we are not to look for happineſs here; 'tis not to be found in this land of the living; and after our enquiries after it, we ſhall ſee ſufficient reaſon to take up Solomon's concluſion, that "all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit;" which is much the ſame with that aphoriſm of David his father, which I mentioned before, that "man in his "beſt eſtate is altogether vanity."

But what happineſs ſoever our condition in this world is capable of, 'tis moſt aſſuredly full of uncertainty and unſettlement; we cannot enjoy it long, and every moment we are in danger of being deprived of it. Whatever degree of earthly felicity we are poſſeſſed of, we have no ſecurity that it ſhall continue. There is nothing in this world, but, when we are as ſure of it as this world can make us, may be taken away from us by a thouſand accidents. But ſuppoſe it to abide and continue; we ourſelves ſhall be taken away from it. We muſt die, and "in that "very day" all our enjoyments and hopes, as to this world, will periſh with us; for here is no abiding place, "we have no continuing city;" ſo that it is in vain to deſign a happineſs to our ſelves in this world, when we are not to ſtay in it, but only travel and paſs through it.

And this is the firſt; our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled.

II. Our condition in this world being a ſtate of pilgrimage, doth imply a tendency to future ſettlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition hereafter. And ſo the apoſtle reaſons immediately after the text; "they confeſſed that they were pil-"grims and ſtrangers on the earth; for they that

" ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a " country;" that is, they who acknowledge themſelves to be " pilgrims and ſtrangers in the earth," and yet withal profeſs to be perſuaded of the goodneſs of GOD and the fidelity of his promiſe, " do " plainly declare, that they ſeek" another " country." This is ſpoken of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, who acknowledged themſelves to be " ſtrangers and pil- " grims in the earth; and thereby " declared, that " they ſought" another " country." Now, ſays the apoſtle, this cannot be the country from whence they firſt came, Ur of the Chaldees, ver. 15. " And " truly, if they had been mindful of that country " from whence they came out, they might have had " an opportunity of returning thither." And therefore he concludes, that the country which they ſought was a better country than any in this world, ver. 16. " But now they deſire a better country; that is, an " heavenly. Therefore GOD is not aſhamed to be " called their GOD; for he hath prepared for them " a city." This plainly refers to that famous declaration or promiſe of GOD to the patriarchs, of being their GOD; " I am the GOD of Abraham, the " GOD of Iſaac, and the GOD of Jacob." Now certainly this promiſe of GOD did ſignify ſome very great bleſſing and advantage to thoſe faithful ſervants of GOD above others. This was not made good to them in this world; for " they confeſſed, that they " were pilgrims and ſtrangers in the earth." Where then is the bleſſing ſpoken of and ſignified by the great words of that promiſe that " GOD was their GOD?" They met with no ſuch condition in this world, as was anſwerable to the greatneſs of that promiſe. From hence the apoſtle argues, that they had a firm perſuaſion of a future happineſs; " for they that ſay ſuch

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" things declare plainly, that they ſeek a better coun-
" try; that is, an heavenly. Wherefore GOD is not
" aſhamed to be called their GOD, ſince he hath pre-
" pared for them a city." And though the promiſe of GOD to Abraham did immediately deſign the land of Canaan, and the earthly Jeruſalem; yet the apoſtle extends it to that which was typified by it; viz. " an heavenly country," the " Jeruſalem which is " above," which, at the 10th verſe of this chapter, is called " a city which hath foundations, whoſe " builder and maker is GOD." And now, ſeeing GOD hath deſigned and prepared ſo great a happineſs for them in another world, well might he be called "their GOD," notwithſtanding that they were " ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth;" that is, though the full meaning and importance of this promiſe was not made good to them in this world, yet it was accompliſhed to the full in the happineſs which was deſigned for them in another life. " And " GOD need not be aſhamed to be called their " GOD;" implying, that if nothing had been meant by it beyond this world, this promiſe, of GOD's being "their GOD," would have fallen ſhamefully ſhort of what it ſeemed to import. And this I conceive to be the true reaſon, why our SAVIOUR lays ſo much weight upon this promiſe, as to pitch upon it for the proof of the reſurrection; that is, of a future ſtate of happineſs in another world.

There are many conſiderations apt to perſuade good men of another life after this; as, that mankind is generally poſſeſſed with this hope and perſuaſion; and that the more wiſe and virtuous men have been, the more plainly have they apprehended the hopes of immortality, and the better have they been contented to leave this world, as if, ſeeing far-

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ther than other men, they had a clearer proſpect of the happineſs they were entring upon: but above all, that GOD hath made our condition in this world ſo troubleſom and unſettled, as if he had deſigned on purpoſe to make us ſeek for happineſs elſewhere, and to elevate and raiſe our minds to the hopes and expectation of a condition better and more durable, than any that is to be met with in this world; which, conſidering the goodneſs of GOD, and his gracious providence and care of good men, is a thing of itſelf extremely credible. SERM. LXVIII.

Having thus, as briefly as I could, diſpatched the two particulars which I propounded to ſpeak to for the explication of the text, I ſhould now ſhew what influence theſe conſiderations ought to have upon our lives and practice.

And if this be our condition in this world, and theſe our hopes and expectations as to another life; if we be "pilgrims and ſtrangers on the earth;" and "look for a better country, that is, an heavenly;" this ought to have a great influence upon us in theſe following reſpects, which I ſhall at preſent but very briefly mention.

1. Let us intangle and incumber ourſelves as little as we can in this our pilgrimage; let us not engage our affections too far in the pleaſures and advantages of this world; for we are not to continue and ſettle in it, but to paſs through it. A little will ſerve for our paſſage and accommodation in this journey; and beyond that, why ſhould we ſo earneſtly covet and ſeek more?

2. If we be "pilgrims and ſtrangers;" then it concerns us to behave ourſelves blameleſly and inoffenſively, remembering, that the eyes of people are upon us, and that thoſe among whom we live will be

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very curious and obſervant of our manners and carriage.

3. Let us be chearful and patient under the troubles and afflictions of this preſent life. They who are in a ſtrange country, muſt expect to encounter many injuries and affronts, and to be put to great difficulties and hazards, which we ſhould endeavour to bear with that chearfulneſs, as men that are upon a journey uſe to bear foul ways and bad weather, and inconvenient lodging and accommodations.

4. The conſideration of our preſent condition and future hopes ſhould ſet us above the fondneſs of life, and the ſlaviſh fear of death. For our minds will never be raiſed to their true pitch and height, till we have in ſome good meaſure conquered theſe two paſſions, and made them ſubject to our reaſon. As for this preſent life, and the enjoyments of it, what do we ſee in them, that ſhould make us ſo ſtrangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miſeris tam dira cupido!* This world, at the beſt, is but a very indifferent place: and he is the wiſeſt man that bears himſelf towards it with the moſt indifferent affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to ſtay in it as long as GOD pleaſes.

5. We ſhould always prefer our duty and a good conſcience before all the world; becauſe it is in truth more valuable, if our ſouls be immortal, and do ſurvive in another world. For (as our SAVIOUR argues) "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole "world, and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a "man give in exchange for his ſoul?" And thus St. Paul reaſoned with himſelf, from the belief of "a "reſurrection of the juſt and unjuſt. For this cauſe "(ſaith he) I exerciſe my ſelf alway to have a con"ſcience void of offence both toward GOD and to"ward man."

Laſtly,

Laſtly, If we be ſojourners and travellers, we ſhould often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlaſting happineſs; and the way to it is a conſtant and ſincere and univerſal obedience to the commandments of GOD. When the young man in the goſpel enquired of our SAVIOUR the way to eternal happineſs, ſaying, "good maſter, "what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit "eternal life?" His anſwer to him was, "if thou "wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." We may eaſily miſtake our way; for "ſtrait is the "gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and "few there be that find it." Therefore we ſhould often pray to GOD, as David does, Pſal. cxix. 19. "I am a ſtranger in the earth, hide not thy com-"mandments from me." And Pſalm cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O GOD, and know my heart; try "me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be "any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way "everlaſting."

SERMON LXIX.

Good men ſtrangers and ſojourners upon earth.

HEB. XI. 13.

And confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The whole verſe runs thus;

Theſe all died in faith, not having received the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

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I Have lately in this place (upon a particular day and occaſion) begun to handle theſe words; I ſhall briefly give you the heads of what hath been already delivered, and proceed to what remains. And that which I deſigned from this text was, to repreſent to us our preſent condition in this world, and to awaken our minds to a due ſenſe and conſideration of it. It is the ſame condition that all the ſaints and holy men that have gone before us were in, in this world; and we may all of us ſay with David, Pſal. xxxix. 12. "I am a ſtranger with thee, "and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were."

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

It

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It is very frequent, not only in ſcripture, but in other authors, to repreſent our condition in this world, by that of "pilgrims and ſojourners" in a far country. For the mind, which is the man, and our immortal ſouls, which are, by far, the more noble and excellent part of ourſelves, are the natives of heaven, and but "pilgrims and ſtrangers" here on the earth; and when the days of our pilgrimage ſhall be accompliſhed, are deſigned to return to that "heavenly country" from which they came, and to which they belong. And for the explication of this metaphor, I inſiſted only upon two things, which ſeem plainly to be deſigned and intended by it.

I. That our condition in this world is very troubleſom and unſettled; "they confeſſed that they "were pilgrims and ſtrangers on the earth."

II. It implies a tendency to a future ſettlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we ſhall enter when we go out of this world.

And theſe I told you are two very weighty and uſeful conſiderations; that we ſhould both underſtand our preſent condition in this world, and our future hopes and expectation after our departure out of it; that ſo we may demean ourſelves ſuitably to both theſe conditions; both as is fit for thoſe who look on themſelves as "pilgrims and ſojourners" in this world; and likewiſe, as it becomes thoſe who "ſeek "and expect a better country," and hope to be partakers of a bleſſed immortality in another world.

I. That our condition in this world is very troubleſom and unſettled; and this is principally intended by the metaphor of "pilgrims and ſtrangers." Such was the life of the patriarchs here ſpoken of in the text; they had no conſtant abode and fixt ha-

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bitation, but were continually wandering from one kingdom and country to another; in which travels they were expoſed to a great many dangers and ſufferings, affronts and injuries; as we read at large in the hiſtory of their travels in the old teſtament. And ſuch is our condition in this world; it is often troubleſom, and always uncertain, and unſettled; ſo that whatever degree of worldly felicity any man is poſſeſt of, he hath no ſecurity that it ſhall continue for one moment.

II. Our condition in this world being a ſtate of pilgrimage, it implies a tendency to a future ſettlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we ſhall enter ſo ſoon as we leave this world. For ſo it follows immediately after the text; "they confeſſed that they were pilgrims "and ſtrangers on the earth; for they that ſay ſuch "things, declare plainly that they ſeek a country. "They that ſay ſuch things," that is, they that acknowledge themſelves to have lived in ſuch a reſtleſs and uncertain condition in this world, travelling from one place to another, as the patriarchs Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob did; and yet pretend to be perſuaded of the goodneſs of GOD, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſe, in which he ſo ſolemnly declares himſelf to be their God; do hereby plainly ſhew, that they expect ſome happier condition hereafter, wherein that great promiſe of GOD will be made good to them to the full; ſo that he need "not be aſhamed "to have been called their GOD."

Having handled at large theſe two particulars, I come now to ſhew what influence the conſideration of them ought to have upon our lives and practices. And if this be our condition in this world, and theſe our hopes and expectations, as to another life, if we be

be "pilgrims and ſtrangers in the earth," and "look- SERM.
"for a better country," that is, "an heavenly;" LXIX.
this ought to have a great influence upon us in theſe following reſpects, which I did but briefly mention before; but ſhall now proſecute and preſs more largely.

I. Let us entangle and incumber ourſelves as little as we can in this our pilgrimage: let us not engage our affections too far in the pleaſures and advantages of this world, becauſe we are not to ſtay in it, but to paſs through it. Upon this conſideration the apoſtle St. Peter doth ſo earneſtly exhort Chriſtians to preſerve themſelves from fleſhly luſts, 1 Pet. ii. 11. "Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as ſtrangers and "pilgrims, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war "againſt the ſoul." The gratifying of our inordinate luſts, and our carnal and ſenſual inclinations, is directly oppoſite both to the nature of our immortal ſpirits, and to their great deſign and buſineſs in this world. Fleſhly luſts do not only pollute and defile, but even quench and extinguiſh our diviner part, and do work the ruin and deſtruction of it; they ſink our affections into the mud and filth of this world, and do entangle and detain them there; in a word, they do wholly indiſpoſe and unfit us for that pure and ſpiritual and divine life, which alone can qualify us for our heavenly country and inheritance. And therefore while our ſouls are ſojourning in this world, we ſhould abſtain from them, and preſerve ourſelves unſpotted and untainted by them, as being altogether unuſeful, and perfectly contrary to the laws and manners of our heavenly country. If we wallow in bruiſh and filthy luſts, as we paſs through this world; our native country, when our ſouls think to return to it, will reject us and caſt us out: when we come

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to heaven's gate, and knock there, expecting to be admitted, and ſhall cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us;" he will bid us to "depart from him, becauſe "we have been workers of iniquity." Nothing that "is unclean can enter into heaven. He who is to receive us into thoſe bleſſed manſions, hath declared it to be his immutable reſolution and decree, that "without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the LORD." And therefore as ever we hope to ſee GOD, in that happy and bliſsful ſtate, we muſt "cleanſe ourſelves "from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfect "holineſs in the fear of GOD;" that having rendered ourſelves as like him as we can in this world, we may be capable of the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of him in the other.

And as for the advantages in this world, let us not purſue them too eagerly. We may take the conveniencies which fairly offer themſelves to us, and be content to want what we cannot honeſtly have, and without going out of the way of our duty; conſidering that we are travellers, and that a little will ſerve for our paſſage and accommodation in our pilgrimage. And beyond that, why ſhould we ſo earneſtly covet more, and trouble ourſelves for that which is not neceſſary to our journey? Why ſhould we at any time deal unjuſtly to attain any of this world's goods? They will ſtand us in ſtead for ſo little a while, that we can have no temptation to injure or oppreſs any man, to break the peace of our conſciences, and to wound our ſouls for the attaining of them. If the providence of GOD offer them to us, and bring them to our hands, in the uſe of honeſt diligence and lawful means; as we are not to refuſe them, ſo neither are we to ſet our hearts upon them, nor to ſuffer our affections to be entangled in them.

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The wiſeſt uſe we can make of them, will be, to do like thoſe who traffick in foreign parts, to conſign our eſtates into our own native country, to ſend our treaſures before us into the other world, that we may have the benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by alms and charity. Whatever we ſpend upon the fleſh, we leave behind us, and it will turn to no account to us in our own country: but whatever we lay out for the relief of the poor, is ſo much treaſure laid out and ſecured to ourſelves, againſt another day. So our bleſſed SAVIOUR aſſures us, Luke xii. 33. That giving of alms is "providing for ourſelves bags that wax not old, a "treaſure in the heavens that faileth not." SERM. LXIX.

II. If we be pilgrims and ſtrangers, then it concerns us to behave ourſelves with great caution, and to live blameleſly and inoffenſively; remembring that the eyes of people are upon us, and that thoſe among whom we ſojourn, will be very prying and curious and narrow obſervers of our manners and carriage. They that are in a ſtrange country, are not wont to take that liberty and freedom, which the natives of the place may do, but to keep a perpetual guard upon themſelves, knowing how ſtrictly they are obſerved, and that they live among thoſe who bear no good will to them, and that every bad thing we do, reflects upon our nation, and is a reproach to the country to which we belong. "Ye are not of the world;" (ſays our Lord) "if ye were of the world, the world "would love its own: but ye are not of the world; "therefore the world hateth you." Upon this account the apoſtle chargeth Chriſtians to be "harm-"leſs and blameleſs," and "as it becomes the ſons "of GOD to be, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe "nation, among whom we "ſhould "ſhine as lights."

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The ſame argument St. Peter uſeth, 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12. "I beſeech you, as pilgrims and ſtrangers, to abſtain "from fleſhly luſts, having your converſation honeſt "among the Gentiles;" that is, conſidering that you are among ſtrangers and enemies, and therefore ought to be very careful to bring no ſcandal upon your holy profeſſion, among thoſe who will be ready to take all advantages againſt you. Particularly, we who pretend to the ſame heavenly country, muſt be kind to one another; and whilſt we live among ſtrangers have no quarrels amongſt ourſelves. In a ſtrange country, it uſeth to be a mighty endearment of men to one another, that they are of the ſame country, and fellow citizens, and this alone is commonly ſufficient to unite their affections, and link their intereſt together. But how little of this is to be ſeen among Chriſtians! How ſhamefully do they quarrel among themſelves, in the midſt of enemies and ſtrangers? As if they had no relation to one another, and never expected to meet at laſt in the ſame country, and there to live together for ever.

III. Let us be as patient and chearful as we can, under all the troubles and afflictions which we meet with in this life. They who are in ſtrange countries muſt expect to encounter many injuries and affronts, and to be put to great difficulties and hardſhips. Thoſe which are lighter and more tolerable, we muſt bear with chearfulneſs. Upon a journey men uſe to put on all the pleaſantneſs they can, and to make ſport of all the inconveniencies of the ways and weather, and little croſs accidents that befal them: and thus, if we had but the art and wiſdom to do it, many of the leſſer inconveniencies of human life might well enough be played off, and made matter rather of mirth and diverſion, than of melancholy and ſerious trouble. But

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But there are ſome evils and calamities of human life, that are too heavy and ſerious to be jeſted withal, and require the greateſt conſideration, and a very great degree of patience to ſupport us under them, and enable us to bear them decently; as the loſs of friends and deareſt relations; as the loſs of an only ſon, grown up to be well fixt and ſettled in a virtuous courſe, and promiſing all the comfort to his parents that they themſelves can wiſh: theſe certainly are ſome of the greateſt evils of this world, and hardeſt to be borne. For men may pretend what they will to philoſophy, and contempt of the world, and of the periſhing comforts and enjoyments of it; to the extirpation of their paſſions, and an inſenſibility of theſe things, which the weaker and undiſciplined part of mankind keep ſuch a wailing and lamentation about: but when all is done, nature hath framed us as we are, and hath planted in our nature ſtrong inclinations and affections to our friends and relations, and theſe affections are as naturally moved upon ſuch occaſions, and pluck every ſtring of our hearts as violently, as extreme hunger and thirſt do gnaw upon our ſtomachs.

And therefore it is fooliſh for any man to pretend to love things mightily, and to rejoice greatly in the enjoyment of them; and yet to be ſo eaſily contented to loſe them, and to be parted from them. This is to ſeparate things which nature hath ſtrongly linked together. Whatever we mightily love, does thereby in ſome ſort become part of ourſelves; and it cannot hang looſe to us, to be ſeparated and divorced from us without trouble; no more than a limb, that is vitally and by ſtrong ligaments united to the body, can be lopt off when we pleaſe, or rent from the body without pain. And whoever pretends to have a mighty affection for any thing,

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and yet at the ſame time does pretend that he can contentedly, and without any great ſenſe or ſignification of pain, bear the loſs of it, does not talk like a philoſopher, but like an hypocrite; and under a grave pretence of being wiſe, is in truth, an ill-natured man. For moſt certainly, in proportion to our love of any thing, will be our trouble and grief for the loſs of it.

So that under theſe great and heavier ſtrokes, we had need both of faith and patience. And indeed, nothing but the firm belief of "a better country," that is, "an heavenly," of another life after this, and a bleſſed immortality in another world, is ſufficient to ſupport a man in the "few and evil days of his "pilgrimage," and to ſuſtain his ſpirit under the great evils and calamities of this life. But this fully anſwers all, "that the afflictions and ſufferings of "this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared "with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us." Nay, that if we bear theſe afflictions patiently, and with a due ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD (eſpecially our ſufferings for his truth and cauſe) it will certainly increaſe our happineſs in the other world, and "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

IV. The conſideration of our preſent condition and of our future hopes, ſhould ſet us above the fondneſs of life, and the ſlaviſh fears of death. For our minds will never be raiſed to their true pitch and heighth, till we have in ſome good meaſure conquered theſe two paſſions, and made them ſubject to our reaſon.

As for this preſent life, and the enjoyment of it; what is it that we ſee in them, that ſhould make us ſo ſtrangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miſeris tam dira*

dira cupido! This world at the beſt is but a very indifferent place, and he is the wiſeſt man that bears himſelf towards it with the moſt indifferent mind and affection; that is, always willing to leave it, and yet patient to ſtay in it as long as GOD pleaſeth. And as for death, though the dread of it be natural, yet why ſhould the terrors of it be ſo very ſurprizing and amazing to us, after we have conſidered, that to a good and pious ſoul, it is no other but the gate of heaven, and an entrance into eternal life? We are apt to wonder to ſee a man undaunted at the approach of death, and to be not only contented, but chearful, at the thoughts of his departure out of this world, this ſink of ſin, and vale of miſery and ſorrow. Whereas, if all things be duly conſidered, it is a greater wonder that men are ſo patient to live, and that they are not glad of any fair excuſe and opportunity of getting out of this ſtrange country, and retiring home, and of ridding themſelves of the troubles and inconveniencies of life. For, conſidering the numerous troubles and calamities we are liable to in a long pilgrimage, there are really but three conſiderations that I can readily think of, that can make this world, and our preſent condition in it, in any good meaſure tolerable to a wiſe man, viz. That GOD governs the world; that we are not always to ſtay in it; that there is a happineſs deſigned and reſerved for us in another place, which will abundantly recompenſe and make amends to us for all the troubles and ſufferings of this life.

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And yet it is ſtrange to ſee how faſt moſt men cling to life, and that even in old age; how they catch at every twig that may but hold them up a little while; and how fondly they hanker after a miſerable life, when there is nothing more of pleaſure to

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be enjoyed, nothing more of ſatisfaction to be expected and hoped for in it. When they are juſt putting into the port, and, one would think, ſhould rejoice at their very hearts, that they ſee land; yet how glad would they be then of any croſs wind, that would carry them back into the ſea again? As if they loved to be toſt, and were fond of ſtorms and tempeſts.

Nay, the very beſt of us, even after we have made that acknowledgment of David; "I am a ſtranger "and a ſojourner with thee, as all my fathers were;" are apt with him to be ſtill importuning GOD for a little longer life; "O ſpare me a little, that I may "recover ſtrength, before I go hence, and be no more." And when GOD hath granted us this requeſt, then we would be ſpared yet a little longer.

But let us remember, that GOD did not deſign us to continue always in this world; and that he hath on purpoſe made it ſo uneaſy to us, to make us willing to leave it: and that ſo long as we linger here below, we are detained from our happineſs; "while "we are preſent in the body, we are abſent from the "LORD." This conſideration made St. Paul ſo "deſirous to be diſſolved," becauſe "he knew, that "when his earthly houſe of this tabernacle was diſ-"ſolved, he ſhould have a much better habitation, a "building of GOD, an houſe not made with hands, "eternal in the heavens." This was that which made him ſo full of joy and triumph, at the thoughts of his leaving the world: 2 Tim. iv. 6. "I am now ready" (ſays he) "to be offered up, and the time of my de-"parture is at hand; I have fought a good fight, "I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith; "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of "righteouſneſs, which GOD the righteous judge ſhall "give me in that day."

Nay,

Nay, the conſideration of this (though but obſcurely apprehended by them) did raiſe the ſpirits of the wiſer and better heathen, and fill them with great joy and comfort at the thoughts of their diſſolution. With what conſtancy and evenneſs of mind did Socrates receive the ſentence of death? And with what excellent diſcourſe did he entertain his friends juſt before he drank off the fatal cup, and after he had taken it down, whilſt death was gradually ſeizing upon him? One can hardly, without a very ſenſible tranſport, read Cato's diſcourſe concerning his death, as it is repreſented by Tully in his book of old age. "I am" (ſays he) "tranſported with a deſire of ſee-"ing my forefathers, thoſe excellent perſons of whom "I have heard, and read, and written; and now I "am going to them, I would not willingly be drawn "back into this world again; *quod ſi quis Deus mihi* "*largiatur, ut ex hac ætate repuereſcam, & in cunis* "*vagiam, valde recuſem.* If ſome GOD would offer "me, at this age, to be a child again, and to cry "in the cradle, I would earneſtly refuſe it, and upon "no terms accept it. And now that my race is al-"moſt run, and my courſe juſt finiſhed, how loth "ſhould I be to be brought back, and made to be-"gin again? For what advantage is there in life? "Nay rather, what labour and trouble is there not "in it? But let the benefit of it be what it will, "there is certainly ſome meaſure of life, as well as of "other things, and men ought to know when they "have enough of it." *O præclarum diem, cum in illud animorum conſilium cœtumque proficiſcar, & cum ex hac turba & colluvione diſcedam.* "O bleſſed and glo-"rious day, when I ſhall go to that great council "and aſſembly of ſpirits, and have got out of this "crowd and rabble!" And if a heathen, who had but

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ſome obſcure glimmerings of another life, and of the bleſſed ſtate of departed ſouls, could ſpeak thus chearfully of death; how much more may we, who have a clear and undoubted revelation of theſe things, and to whom "life and immortality are brought to "light by the goſpel."

V. We ſhould always prefer our duty and the keeping of a good conſcience before all the world; becauſe it is, in truth, infinitely more valuable, if ſo be our ſouls be immortal, and do ſurvive in another world, and we muſt there give a ſtrict account of all the actions done by us in this life, and receive the ſentence of eternal happineſs or miſery, "according "to the things done in the body, whether they be "good, or whether they be evil." For as our SAVIOUR argues concerning the caſe of denying him and his truth, to avoid temporal ſuffering and death; "what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole "world, and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a "man give in exchange for his ſoul?" When we are tempted by temporal intereſt and advantage, or by the fear of preſent loſs and ſuffering, to deny or diſſemble our religion, to do any thing that is ſinful in any kind, and contrary to our duty and conſcience, let us aſk ourſelves, what will be the profit and advantage of it? What, if for fear of men, and what they can do to me, I incur the wrath and diſpleaſure of Almighty GOD? This is infinitely more to be dreaded; and his frowns are a thouſand times more terrible, than the bittereſt wrath and cruelleſt malice of men. What, if to preſerve this frail and mortal body, I ſhall evidently hazard the loſs of my immortal ſoul; and to eſcape a temporal inconvenience, I forfeit everlaſting happineſs, and plunge myſelf into eternal miſery and ruin? Would not this be a wild

bargain,

bargain and a mad exchange, for any temporal gain and advantage to loſe the things that are eternal? And for the pleaſing of ourſelves for a little while, to make ourſelves miſerable for ever?

If we confeſs ourſelves to be "pilgrims and ſtran-"gers on the earth," and are perſuaded of the promiſes of GOD concerning an "heavenly country," where we hope to arrive after "the few and evil days "of our pilgrimage" are over; let us not, by complying with the humours of ſtrangers, and the vicious cuſtoms and practices of an evil world, bar ourſelves of our hopes, and baniſh ourſelves from that happy place, to which we all profeſs we are going.

We pretend to be travelling towards heaven: but if we "make ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſci-"ence," we deſtroy our own hopes of ever arriving at that happy port. We do not live up to our expectation of a future happineſs; if the unſeen glories of another world do not raiſe us above all the temptations and terrors of ſenſe. Our faith and hope have not their due and proper influence upon us, if they do not govern our lives and actions, and make us ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of our holy religion, and in the conſcientious practice of it. St. Paul reaſoned himſelf into this holy reſolution, from the hopes of a bleſſed reſurrection, Acts xxiv. 15, 16. "I have "hope," ſays he, "towards GOD, that there ſhall "be a reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and "unjuſt; ἐν τούτῳ δέ, for this cauſe therefore, I ex-"erciſe myſelf always to have a conſcience void of offence, towards GOD, and towards men."

VI. And laſtly, if we be ſojourners and travellers in this world; we ſhould often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlaſting happineſs, and the direct way to it is by

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a conſtant and ſincere and univerſal obedience to the laws and commandments of GOD. And this itſelf is ſo plain a way, that a ſincere and honeſt man can hardly err in it. And therefore we muſt not ſuffer ourſelves to be led and trained out of it, upon any pretence whatſoever; not by the wildfire of pretended illuminations and enthuſiaſms; not by the confident pretence of an infallible guide, that will needs ſhew us another way, and perſuade us to follow him blindfold in it. Let us not quit the infallible rule of GOD's word, to follow any guide whatſoever. "If "an apoſtle, or an angel from heaven, preach any "other doctrine" and way to heaven, "let him be "accurſed." He who is "the way, and the truth, "and the life," when he was conſulted with about the way to eternal happineſs, knew no other but this. For when the young man aſked him; "good maſter, "what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit "eternal life?" His anſwer was, "If thou wilt enter "into life, keep the commandments." It is true indeed, that by reaſon of our corrupt inclinations within, and powerful temptations without, this way (eſpecially at our firſt ſetting out) is rugged and difficult. So our LORD hath forewarned us, telling us, that "ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way that lead-"eth to life," and that "there be few that find it;" therefore we ſhould "ſtrive to enter in," take great care and pains to diſcern the right way, and to overcome the difficulties of our firſt entrance into it; and ſhould often pray to GOD as David did, Pſal. cxix. 19. "I am a ſtranger in the earth; hide not thy com-"mandments from me;" and Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O GOD, and know my heart; try me, "and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any "wicked way in me; and lead me in the way ever-"laſting."

Thus,

Thus, if we would always have our end in our eye, it would both be a direction to us in our way, and an encouragement to quicken our pace in it; there being no more powerful motive to a good life, than to be aſſured, that, "if we have our fruit unto "holineſs, our end ſhall be everlaſting life." SERM. LXX.

SERMON LXX.

The preſence of the Meſſias, the glory of the ſecond temple.

HAGGAI II. 6, 7, 8, 9.

For thus ſaith the LORD *of hoſts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land: and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the* LORD *of hoſts. The ſilver is mine, and the gold is mine, ſaith the* LORD *of hoſts. The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the* LORD *of hoſts; and in this place will I give peace, ſaith the* LORD *of hoſts.*

THE author of this prophecy was the firſt of the three prophets, which GOD ſent to the people of Iſrael after the captivity; and this prophecy contains ſeveral meſſages from GOD, to the

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princes, and elders, and people of Iſrael, in which he reproves their ſlackneſs and negligence in the building of the temple, and encourageth them thereto, by the promiſe of his aſſiſtance; and tells them, that however in reſpect of the magnificence of the building, and the rich ornaments in it, it ſhould be incomparably ſhort of Solomon's temple, (which ſome that were then alive had ſeen in its glory) yet in other reſpects it ſhould far excel it; for the time would come, that this ſecond temple ſhould be graced with the preſence of the Meſſias, which would be a greater glory to it, than all the riches of Solomon's temple.

And this is fully expreſſed in the words which I have read unto you, "thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, "yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the "heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry "land: and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire "of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe "with glory, ſaith the LORD of hoſts. The ſilver "is mine, and the gold is mine, ſaith the LORD of "hoſts. The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be "greater than of the former, ſaith the LORD of "hoſts; and in this place will I give peace, ſaith "the LORD of hoſts."

Now, that it is ſome very great thing which is here foretold and promiſed, for the honour of this ſecond temple, no man can doubt, that conſiders in what a ſolemn manner it is here expreſſed; this great and glorious title, "the LORD of hoſts," being no leſs than five ſeveral times uſed within the compaſs of theſe four verſes; the like inſtance whereto is not, perhaps, in the whole bible: "thus ſaith the LORD "of hoſts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will "ſhake the heavens, and the earth," ver. 6. "And "I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the LORD of

" hoſts," ver. 7. " The ſilver is mine, and the " gold is mine, ſaith the LORD of hoſts," ver. 8. And twice ver. 9. " The glory of this latter houſe " ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the LORD " of hoſts; and in this place will I give peace, ſaith " the LORD of hoſts." So that by the ſolemn manner of expreſſing it, we may imagine, that it is ſome very great thing which is ſpoken of, and ſuch as the like had never been before; and ſuch was the " in- " carnation and coming of the Meſſias." SERM. LXX.

I know that the modern Jews will by no means have this text to be underſtood of the Meſſias, and not without cauſe; for he that is ſpoken of in the text, was to come into the ſecond temple, which hath now been deſtroyed above 1600 years ago; and they do not believe the Meſſias to be yet come; and therefore whatever ſhift they make, they muſt interpret this text, of ſome other perſon than the Meſſias: but then it is plain for what reaſon they do ſo, it being evident from their own Talmud, that the ancient Jews did underſtand it of the Meſſias; but being hardened in their unbelief, they pervert all thoſe texts whereby they might be convinced, that JESUS our bleſſed SAVIOUR was the true Meſſias.

And indeed, whoever carefully conſiders the ſeveral expreſſions and circumſtances of this prediction, cannot underſtand it of any other. To make this evident, I ſhall explain the ſeveral expreſſions in the text, " thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, yet once, it is " a little while." " Yet a little while," ſo it is in the Hebrew, " yet once more," ſo the LXXII render it, and ſo it is quoted from the LXXII in the new teſtament. Heb. xii. 26. and this ſenſe the Hebrew word may likewiſe bear, and our tranſlation of the text takes them both in, " yet once it is a little " while."

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If we take the words in the firſt ſenſe, "yet a little while," they ſignify, that GOD was then beginning thoſe changes in the world, which were to precede and make way for the coming of the Meſſias. This indeed was not till about four hundred years after; but a great while before that time GOD began thoſe changes in the world, which were to prepare the way for his coming; and conſidering the long time which was paſt from the firſt promiſe made to Abraham, four hundred years in compariſon of that may ſeem but a little while. But I rather chooſe the latter ſenſe of this phraſe, "yet once more;" becauſe the Hebrew will bear it, and becauſe it is ſo quoted in the new teſtament; as if the prophet had ſaid, that GOD had before done a great thing in the world, and accompanied with great miracles, viz. "the giving of the law by Moſes," which was attended with great commotions, both in Egypt, by bringing the people of Iſrael out from thence with a mighty hand, and by deſtroying the nations before them, whoſe land GOD gave them for a poſſeſſion; but now he would do one greater thing more, "the "ſending of the Meſſias," and the "planting of his "religion in the world;" in order whereunto there ſhould be much greater, and more univerſal commotions and changes in the world, and more and greater miracles wrought; "yet once more, and I "will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, "and the dry land, and I will ſhake all nations." From which words the apoſtle to the Hebrews argues the aboliſhing of the Jewiſh diſpenſation, and the bringing in of another that ſhould be unalterable, Heb. xii. 27. "And this word, yet once more, "(ſays the apoſtle) ſignifies the removing of thoſe "things that are ſhaken, that thoſe things which

"cannot

" cannot be ſhaken may remain." And this I ſhall have occaſion to explain more fully in the following parts of this diſcourſe. SERM. LXX.

" Yet once more I will ſhake the heavens and " the earth," &c. For the underſtanding whereof we are to conſider, that the Hebrews have no one word whereby to expreſs the world, and therefore they do it by an enumeration of the principal parts of it. So Gen. i. when Moſes would expreſs the creation of the world, he ſays, " in the beginning " God created the heaven and the earth." And ſo St. Peter, when he would expreſs the revolution of all things, after the univerſal conflagration of the world, calls it, " a new heaven, and a new earth," 2 Pet. iii. 13. " Nevertheleſs we, according to his " promiſe, look for new heavens, and a new earth;" that is, a new world, a quite other frame and ſtate of things, than that which we now ſee. And ſo the prophet here in the text, to expreſs the great commotions and changes, that ſhould be in the world before the coming of the Meſſias, ſays, that God " will " ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and " the dry land;" that is, he would cauſe great revolutions in the world; there ſhould be great wars and confuſions, and the empires of the world ſhould paſs from one hand to another. And thus we find this expreſſion interpreted, ver. 21, 22. of this chapter, " I will ſhake the heavens and the earth, " and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and " I will deſtroy the ſtrength of the kingdoms of the " nations." And to ſhew that by " ſhaking the " heavens and the earth," is meant great changes in the world, and as it were an univerſal commotion of it, he adds in the text, by way of farther explication, " and I will ſhake all nations."

And

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And then it follows, "and the deſire of all nations ſhall come." This we (as the ancient Jews alſo did) take to be a plain character and deſcription of the Meſſias, he is "the deſire of all nations;" he whom all nations had reaſon to deſire, becauſe of thoſe great bleſſings and benefits which he was to bring to the world. Thus interpreters generally underſtand theſe words, and it is very true the Meſſias was ſo: but this does not ſeem to be the true importance of this phraſe; for the Hebrew word ſignifies expectation as well as deſire, and ſo I ſhould rather chooſe to render it, "the expectation of all "nations ſhall come;" which ſignifies that about the time of the coming of the Meſſias, not only the Jews, but other nations, ſhould be in a general expectation of ſome great prince then to appear; which was moſt eminently accompliſhed in our bleſſed SAVIOUR, as I ſhall ſhew by and by.

"And I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the "LORD of hoſts," ſpeaking of the ſecond temple, which was then in building, which though it fell very much ſhort of Solomon's, in point of ſtate and magnificence; yet by being honoured with the preſence of the Meſſias, it ſhould be much more glorious than Solomon's temple. "The ſilver is mine, "and the gold is mine, ſaith the LORD of hoſts;" not that GOD wanted the command of gold and ſilver, to have made the ſecond temple equal to Solomon's in outward glory and ſplendor; he could eaſily have made it ſo in that reſpect; and Joſephus tells us, that not long before the time of our SAVIOUR's coming, Herod had built and beautified it to that degree, that in ſome reſpects it excelled Solomon's; and of this ſome underſtand the next words, "the "glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than of

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"the former;" namely, that this was accomplished in that beauty and magnificence which was added to it, when it was re-edified by Herod the great: but however that be, this is certain, that it was much more glorious in another respect, namely, that it entertained the "Messias, the great expectation and blessing of all nations." SERM. LXX.

"And in this place will I give peace, saith the "LORD of hosts." Some understand this, of that universal peace which was throughout the world, when our SAVIOUR was born in the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Others with great probability interpret this of the Messias himself, who is called here by the name of peace; and so some of the ancient Jews understood it; "in this place will I give peace," that is, the Messias. For the Hebrew word signifies all kind of happiness, and so it includes all those blessings and benefits, that happiness and salvation which the Messias brought to the world. And this will appear very probable, if we consider, how frequently in scripture this title is given to the Messias. Isa. ix. 6. he is called "the prince of peace;" and Zach. ix. 10. it is said of him, "that he should speak "peace to the nations," and the apostle to the Hebrews parallels him with Melchisedech in this particular, "that he was king of Salem," that is, "king "of peace;" and which is very little different from this, he is frequently in scripture called salvation, which signifies the happiness of being rescued and delivered from all kind of evil; as peace signifies all kind of good, Isa. xlix. 6. "I will also give thee "for a light to the gentiles, that thou mayest be my "salvation to the end of the earth:" and Luke ii. 30. when Simeon had our blessed SAVIOUR in his arms, when he was first brought into the temple, he calls

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calls him the ſalvation of GOD; "mine eyes" (ſaith he to GOD) "have ſeen thy ſalvation;" and John iv. 22. "ſalvation is of the Jews," that is, the Meſſias was to be of that nation. But which is more expreſs, CHRIST is called "our peace," Eph. ii. 14. nay, he is expreſly called peace, or the peace, Mic. v. 5. "and this man (ſpeaking of the Meſſias) ſhall "be the peace," that is, one of his names or titles ſhall be peace. So that I make little doubt, but that in this expreſſion in the text, of "giving peace," is meant, giving the Meſſias; and that this is render'd as the reaſon, why the glory of the ſecond temple ſhould be greater than of the firſt, becauſe in that place the Meſſias ſhould appear, and remarkably ſhew himſelf. GOD could have given this ſecond temple, if he had thought fit, as much outward glory and beauty as that of Solomon's building; for "ſilver and gold are his," and all the riches of the world are at his command, but he choſe to put a far greater honour upon it than that of ſilver and gold, and to make it much more glorious in another reſpect, "the glory of this latter houſe ſhall "be greater than of the former; becauſe in this "place I will give the Meſſias the peace," and happineſs and ſalvation of mankind, and incomparably the greateſt bleſſing that ever was given to the world.

The words being thus explained, it will now be more eaſy to ſhew, how the ſeveral parts of this prediction do agree to our bleſſed SAVIOUR, and to no other.

I. That there ſhould be great changes and commotions in the world before his coming; "I will "ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and "the dry land, and I will ſhake all nations;" and then he ſhould come.

II. That

II. That about the time of his coming, the world ſhould be in a general expectation of him; "and "the expectation of all nations ſhall come." SERM. LXX.

III. That he ſhould come during the continuance of the ſecond temple; for it was his coming that ſhould fill that houſe with glory, and in that place the Meſſias, who is called peace, is promiſed to be given; "and in this place will I give peace, ſaith "the LORD of hoſts."

IV. That this coming of the Meſſias ſhould be the laſt diſpenſation of GOD for the ſalvation of men, and conſequently ſhould be perpetual and unalterable: "yet once more, and I will ſhake the heavens and "the earth; yet once more," from whence the apoſtle to the Hebrews argues, that the goſpel ſhould be a perpetual and unalterable diſpenſation. Of theſe I ſhall ſpeak ſeverally, and as briefly as I can.

I. Here is a prediction of great changes and commotions in the world, before the coming of the Meſſias; "thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, I will ſhake "the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the "dry land, and I will ſhake all nations, and the de-"ſire of all nations ſhall come;" plainly ſignifying hereby, that before the coming of the Meſſias (who is here called "the deſire and expectation of all na-"tions" there ſhould be very great commotions and changes in the world, that the empire of the world ſhould be overturned; for ſo I have told you, that this expreſſion of "ſhaking the heavens, and the "earth" is explained, verſe 21. of this chapter, "I "will ſhake the heavens and the earth, and will "overthrow the throne of kingdoms." And this was fulfilled in a moſt remarkable manner, between the time of this prophecy, and the coming of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, during which time though it was but

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but four hundred years) there happened greater commotions, and much more conſiderable revolutions, in the great kingdoms of the world, than had done in above two thouſand years before, and in almoſt one thouſand ſeven hundred years ſince; ſo that it is no wonder, that the prediction of theſe things is by GOD himſelf expreſs'd in ſo very ſolemn a manner, as I obſerved before.

At the time of this prophecy, the empire of the world was newly tranſlated from the Aſſyrians to the Medes and Perſians; and not long after, the Grecians under Alexander the great quite overthrew the Perſian empire, and that by as ſudden a change as was ever perhaps made in the world, poſſeſſing themſelves by ſo ſwift and ſpeedy a conqueſt of a great part of the then known world, as if to paſs through it, and to conquer it, had been all one.

After the death of Alexander, the empire of the Grecians was ſhared among his great captains, whom the Romans by degrees conquered, beſides a great many other kingdoms which Alexander never ſaw, and ſome of them perhaps had never heard of. And at laſt the empire of the world, in all its greatneſs and glory, was poſſeſs'd by Auguſtus, in whoſe time our bleſſed SAVIOUR was born.

So that here were mighty commotions in the world, wonderful changes of kingdoms and empires, before the coming of the Meſſias; far greater, and of much larger extent, than thoſe that were in Egypt and Paleſtine, at the bringing of the children of Iſrael out of Egypt, and the giving of the law from mount Sinai. And theſe did not only go before the coming of the Meſſias, but they made way for the more eaſy propagating of his doctrine and religion; for the Grecians, and eſpecially the Romans, ſettled their

their conqueſts in ſuch a manner, as in a good mea- SERM.
ſure to propagate their language among the nations LXX.
which they conquered; and particularly the Romans did make the ways for travel and commerce much more eaſy and commodious than ever they were before by employing their armies, when they had no other work, to make high-ways, for the convenience of paſſage from the ſtation of one legion to another; the benefit and effect whereof we in England enjoy to this day; (a pattern to all princes and ſtates that have neceſſary occaſion for armies, how to employ them;) and this very thing proved afterwards a mighty advantage for the more eaſy and ſpeedy ſpreading of chriſtianity in the world.

II. Another part of this prophecy is, that about the time of the coming of the Meſſias, the world ſhould be in a general expectation of him; " and " the expectation of all nations ſhall come: " and I doubt not but this character of the Meſſias is taken out of that famous propheſy concerning him, Gen. xlix. 10. " The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah " till Shiloh come," (and by Shiloh the ancient Jews generally underſtood the Meſſias) " and to him ſhall " the gathering of the people be; " or as it is rendered by the Septuagint, and ſeveral other tranſlations, " and he ſhall be the expectation of the na- " tions." In alluſion to which ancient propheey concerning him, he is here in the text called, " the " expectation of all nations; " and ſo by the prophet Malachi, chap. iii. ver. 1. " and the LORD whom " ye expect, " or look for, " ſhall ſuddenly come " into his temple." Now this part of the prediction in the text, was moſt eminently fulfilled in our bleſſed SAVIOUR. For about the time of his coming, the Jews were in a general expectation of him

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as appears not only from that ancient and general tradition of theirs, from the ſchool of Elias, "that "at the end of the ſecond two thouſand years of the "world, the Meſſias ſhould come;" (and our bleſſed SAVIOUR's coming did accordingly happen at that time;) but likewiſe from that particular computation of the Jewiſh doctors, not long before our SAVIOUR's coming, who, upon a ſolemn debate of the matter, did determine that the Meſſias would come within fifty years. And this is farther confirmed, from the great jealouſy which Herod had concerning "a king "of the Jews," that was expected to be born about that time; and from that remarkable teſtimony in Joſephus, who tells us, "that the Jews rebelled a-"gainſt the Romans, being encouraged thereto by "a famous prophecy in their ſcriptures, that about "that time a great prince ſhould be born among "them, that ſhould rule the world:" and Joſephus flattered Veſpaſian ſo far, as to make him belive that he was the man; and thereupon perſuaded him to deſtroy the line of David, out of which the tradition was, that the Meſſias ſhould ſpring; as if the accompliſhment of a divine prediction could be hindered by any human endeavour.

And this was not only the general expectation of the Jews about that time, but of a great part of the world; as appears from thoſe two famous teſtimonies of two of the moſt eminent roman hiſtorians, Suetonius and Tacitus. The words of Suetonius are theſe, *Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus & conſtans opinio, eſſe in fatis, ut Judæâ profecti rerum potirentur:* "there was "an ancient and general opinion, famous through-"out all the eaſtern parts, that the fates had deter-"mined, that there ſhould come out of Judea thoſe "that ſhould govern the world;" and he adds what

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I quoted before out of Joſephus, *id Judæi ad ſe tra-* SERM.
hentes rebellarunt; "that the Jews taking this to LXX.
"themſelves, did thereupon rebel." Now it is very remarkable, that the very words of this tradition ſeem to be a verbal tranſlation of that prophecy in Micah, "that out of Judah ſhould come the go-"vernor:" *ut Judæa profecti rerum potirentur*. The other teſtimony is out of Tacitus; and his words are theſe, (lib. 21. §. 13.) *Pluribus perſuaſio inerat antiquis ſacerdotum libris contineri, eo ipſo tempore fore, ut valeſceret oriens, profectique Judæâ rerum potirenter*: "a great many (ſays he) were poſſeſſed with a "perſuaſion that it was contained in the ancient "books of the prieſts, that at that very time the "eaſt ſhould prevail, and that they who ſhould go-"vern the world, were to come out of Judea." By the ancient books of the prieſts, he in all probability means, the ancient prophecies of ſcripture; for the laſt expreſſion is the ſame with that of Suetonius taken out of the prophet Micah; and the other, "that the eaſt ſhould prevail," does plainly refer to that title given to the Meſſias by the prophet Zachary, chap. vi. 12. where he is called, "the man "whoſe name is צמח," which ſignifies oriens and germen, both the "eaſt" and "a branch;" our tranſlation hath it, "the man whoſe name is the "branch;" but it might as well be rendered, "the "man whoſe name is the eaſt." Thus you ſee this character of our SAVIOUR in this prophecy moſt literally fulfilled, that he was "the expectation of "all nations." I proceed to the

III. Circumſtance of this prediction, that he who is here foretold, ſhould come during the continuance of this ſecond temple; becauſe it was his preſence, that ſhould "fill that houſe with glory;" and it was

SERM. LXX.

in that place that the Meſſias, who is called "the "peace," is promiſed to be given; "and in this "place will I give peace; ſaith the LORD of hoſts." And this is likewiſe moſt expreſly foretold by the prophet Malachi, chap. iii. 1. "Behold, I will "ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way "before me; and the LORD, whom ye look for, "ſhall ſuddenly come into his temple; even the "meſſenger of the covenant whom ye delight in, "behold he ſhall come, ſaith the LORD of hoſts:" And accordingly JESUS our bleſſed SAVIOUR came during the ſecond temple; he was preſented there by his parents, and owned by Simeon for the Meſſias; he diſputed there, and taught frequently there, and by his preſence "filled that houſe with glory." For that the Son of GOD taught publickly there, was a greater honour to it, than all the ſilver and gold of Solomon's temple.

And not long after his death (according to his expreſs prediction) this ſecond temple was deſtroyed to the ground; "ſo that not one ſtone of it was left "upon another." And when ſome hundred years after, it was attempted to be rebuilt three ſeveral times, the laſt whereof was by Julian the apoſtate, in oppoſition to chriſtianity, and to our SAVIOUR's prediction; fire came out of the foundation, and deſtroyed the workmen; ſo that they deſiſted in great terror, and durſt never attempt it afterwards. And this not only the chriſtian writers of that age in great numbers do teſtify, but Ammianus Marcellinus (a heathen hiſtorian who lived in that time) does alſo give us a very particular account of this memorable matter. So that if by "the expectation of the na-"tions" be here meant "the Meſſias," (as I have plainly ſhewn) then he is long ſince come, and was

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no other than JESUS our bleſſed SAVIOUR, who ac- SERM.
cording to this prophecy, "was to fill the ſecond LXX.
"temple with glory;" which hath now been demoliſhed above one thouſand ſix hundred years ago, and the rebuilding whereof hath been ſo often and ſo remarkably hindered from heaven. The conſideration of all which were ſufficient to convince the Jews of their vain expectation of a Meſſias yet to come; were they not ſo obſtinately rooted and fixed in their infidelity. There remains now the

IV. And laſt circumſtance of this prophecy, viz. that the coming of the Meſſias was to be the laſt diſpenſation of GOD, for the ſalvation of men; and conſequently was to be perpetual and unchangeable; "Yet once more, and I will ſhake the heavens, and "the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land: and I "will ſhake all nations, and the expectation of all "nations ſhall come." Yet once more; from which words, the apoſtle to the Hebrews argues the perpetuity of the goſpel, and that it was the diſpenſation which ſhould never be changed, Heb. xii. 27. "And "this word, yet once more, ſignifies, the removing "of thoſe things which are ſhaken, as of things "that are made, that thoſe things which cannot be "ſhaken may remain." And then it follows, "where-"fore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be "moved, &c." It was uſual with the Jews to deſcribe the times of the goſpel, by "the kingdom "of the Meſſias; and accordingly the apoſtle here calls the diſpenſation of the goſpel, "a kingdom "which cannot be moved:" in oppoſition to the law, which was an imperfect and alterable diſpenſation. For this is plainly the ſcope of the apoſtle's reaſoning; namely, to convince the Jews, that they were now under a more gracious and perfect diſpen-

SERM. LXX.

ſation than that of the law, ver. 18. "Ye are not "come unto the mount, that might be touched, "and that burned with fire;" meaning mount Sinai, which was a ſenſible literal mountain, "a mountain "that might be touched," in oppoſition to the myſtical and ſpiritual mount Sion; by which the diſpenſation of the goſpel is deſcribed: which by the way prevents the objection of its being called "the "mountain that might be touched," when it was forbidden to be touched upon pain of death; "Ye "are not come to the mount that might be touched;" that is, I am not now ſpeaking of a literal and ſenſible mountain, ſuch as was mount Sinai, from whence the law was given; but of that ſpiritual and heavenly diſpenſation of the goſpel, which was typified by mount Sion and by Jeruſalem; "but ye are come "to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living "God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to JESUS the "Mediator of the new covenant." And then he cautions them to take heed how they reject him that came from heaven, to make this laſt revelation of GOD to the world; which, becauſe of the clearneſs and perfection of it, ſhould never need to receive any change, ver. 25. "See that ye refuſe not him "that ſpeaketh; for if they eſcaped not, who refuſed "him that ſpake on earth," (viz. Moſes, who delivered the law from mount Sinai) "much more ſhall "not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that "ſpeaketh from heaven: whoſe voice then ſhook the "earth," (alluding to the earthquake at the giving of the law) "but now he hath promiſed, ſaying, yet "once more, I ſhake not the earth only; but alſo "heaven;" that is, "the whole world," in order to the coming of the Meſſias, and the planting of the goſpel in the world; and then he argues from the words

words "once more," that the former diſpenſation ſhould be removed, to make way for that which ſhould perpetually remain. SERM. LXX.

And indeed there is no need of any farther revelation after this; nor of any change of that religion which was brought from heaven by the Son of GOD; becauſe of the perfection of it, and its fitneſs to reform the world, and to recover mankind out of their lapſed and degenerate condition, and to bring them to happineſs; both by the purity of its doctrine, and the power of its arguments to work upon the minds of men, by the clear diſcovery of the mighty rewards and puniſhments of another world.

And now the proper inference from all this diſcourſe, is the very ſame with that which the apoſtle makes, from the conſideration of the perfection and excellency of this revelation, which GOD hath made to the world by his Son. "See that ye refuſe not "him that ſpeaketh: for how ſhall we eſcape, if "we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from hea-"ven?" And at the 28th verſe of that chapter, "wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot "be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may "ſerve GOD acceptably, with reverence and godly "fear;" that is, let us live as becomes thoſe to whom GOD hath made ſo clear and perfect a revelation of his will. We have all the advantages of the divine revelation which the world ever had, and the laſt and moſt perfect that the world ever ſhall have: We have not only Moſes and the prophets, but that doctrine which the Son of GOD came down from heaven on purpoſe to declare to the world. GOD hath vouchſafed to us that clear and complete revelation of his will, which he denied to "many pro-"phets and righteous men; who deſired to ſee the

SERM. LXX.

" things which we ſee, but could not ſee them; and to " hear the things which we hear, but could not hear " them." There were good men in the world under thoſe imperfect revelations which GOD made to them; but we have far greater advantages, and more powerful arguments to be good than ever they had. And as we ought thankfully to acknowledge theſe bleſſed advantages; ſo ought we likewiſe, with the greateſt care and diligence, to improve them.

And now how does the ſerious conſideration of this, condemn all impenitent ſinners under the goſpel, who will not be reclaimed from their ſins, and perſuaded to goodneſs, by all that GOD can do; by the moſt plain declaration of his will to the world, by the moſt perfect precepts and directions for a good life; by the moſt encouraging promiſes to obedience, and by the moſt ſevere threatnings of an eternal and unutterable ruin, in caſe of diſobedience; " by the " wrath of GOD, revealed from heaven, againſt all " ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men;" by the terrors of the great day, and the vengeance of eternal fire; by the wonderful and amazing condeſcention of the Son of GOD, appearing in our nature; by his merciful undertaking for the redemption of loſt and ſinful man; by his cruel ſufferings for our ſins, and by the kindeſt offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood, and by the glorious hopes of eternal life!

What could GOD have done more for us, than he hath done? What greater concernment could he ſhew for our ſalvation, than " to ſend his own Son, his " only Son, to ſeek and ſave us?" And what greater demonſtration could he give of his love to us, than " to give the Son of his love to die for us?" This is the laſt effort that the divine mercy and goodneſs will make upon mankind. So the apoſtle tells us in the begin-

beginning of this epiſtle, chap. i. 1. that "GOD who "at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in "times paſt unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath "in theſe laſt days, ſpoken to us by his Son:" and if we will not hear him, he will ſpeak no more; after this it is not to be expected that he ſhould make any farther attempts for our recovery, he can ſend no greater and dearer perſon to us, than "his own "Son." If we deſpiſe him; whom will we reverence? If we reject him, and the great ſalvation which he brings and offers to us; we have all the reaſon in the world to believe that our caſe is deſperate, and that we ſhall "die in our ſins." "This was "the condemnation of the Jews, that they did not "receive and believe on him whom GOD had ſent." And if we who profeſs to believe on him, and to receive his doctrine, be found diſobedient to it, in our lives, we have reaſon to fear that our condemnation ſhall be far heavier than theirs: for ſince the appearance of "the Son of GOD" for the ſalvation of men, "the wrath of GOD is revealed from heaven againſt "all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men," eſpecially againſt thoſe "who detain the truth of GOD "in unrighteouſneſs;" that is, againſt thoſe who entertain the light of GOD's truth in their minds, but do not ſuffer it to have its proper effect and influence upon their hearts and lives; and make that a priſoner, which would make them free. So our LORD tells us, that "the truth ſhall make us free;" but if "after we have received the knowledge of "the truth," we are ſtill "the ſervants of ſin;" our condemnation is much worſe, than if "the Son of "GOD" had never come: for the chriſtian religion hath done nothing; if it do not take men off from their ſins, and teach them to live well.

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Eſpecially at this time when we are celebrating "the coming of this Son of GOD, to deſtroy the "works of the devil," we ſhould take great heed, that we be not found guilty of any impiety or wickedneſs; becauſe this is directly contrary to the main deſign "of the grace of GOD, which brings ſalva-"tion, and hath appeared to all men," (and the appearance whereof we do at this time commemorate) for that "teacheth men to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly and righteouſly and "godlily in this preſent world:" and we cannot gratify the devil more, than by ſhewing ourſelves more diligent than ordinary to uphold his works, at "this very time," when "the Son of GOD was ma-"nifeſted" on purpoſe "to diſſolve them:" we cannot poſſibly chuſe a worſe, a more improper ſeaſon to ſin in, than when we are celebrating the birth of the bleſſed JESUS, who came "to ſave us from our "ſins." This is, as if a ſick man, for joy that a famous phyſician is come to his houſe, ſhould run into all manner of exceſs, and ſo do all he can to inflame his diſeaſe, and make his caſe deſperate. Not but that our inward joy may lawfully be accompanied with all outward innocent expreſſions of it: but we cannot be truly thankful, if we allow ourſelves at this time in any thing contrary to the purity and ſobriety of the goſpel. It is matter of juſt and ſad complaint, being of great ſcandal to our SAVIOUR, and his holy religion, that ſuch irregular and extravagant things are at this time commonly done by many, who call themſelves Chriſtians; and done under a pretence of doing honour to the memory of CHRIST's birth; as if, becauſe the Son of GOD was at this time made man, it were fit for men to make themſelves beaſts,

If

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If we would honour him indeed, we muſt take care that our joy do not degenerate into ſin and ſenſuality, and that we do not expreſs it by leudneſs and luxury, by intemperance and exceſs, by prodigal gaming, and profuſe waſting of our eſtates, "as the "manner of ſome is;" as if we intended literally to requite our SAVIOUR, "who being rich, for our "ſakes became poor." This is the way of "parting "with houſes and land, and becoming poor for his "ſake, "for which he will never thank, nor reward us. This is not to commemorate the coming of our SAVIOUR, but to contradict it, and openly to declare that we will uphold "the works of the devil," in deſpite of "the Son of GOD, who came to deſtroy "them." It is for all the world like that leud and ſenſeleſs piece of loyalty, too much in faſhion ſome years ago, of being drunk for the king. Good God! that ever it ſhould paſs for a piece of religion among Chriſtians, to run into all manner of exceſs for twelve days together, in honour of our SAVIOUR! A greater aggravation of ſin cannot eaſily be imagined, than to abuſe the memory of the greateſt bleſſing that ever was, "CHRIST coming into the world to take away "ſin," into an opportunity of committing it; this is to repreſent the Son of GOD as a patron of ſin and licentiouſneſs, and to treat him more contumeliouſly than the Jews did, who bowed the knee to him, and mocked him, and called him king, and ſpit upon him; and, under a pretence of rejoicing for his birth, "to crucify to ourſelves afreſh the LORD of "life and glory; and to put him to an open ſhame."

I will conclude all with the apoſtle's exhortation, Rom. xiii. 12, 13, 14. "Let us caſt off the works "of darkneſs, and let us put on the armour of light. "Let us walk decently as in the day; not in rioting

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" and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wanton-
" neſs, not in ſtrife and envying. But put ye on
" the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provi-
" ſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſt thereof."

Now to our moſt gracious and merciful GOD, the great friend and lover of ſouls, who regarded us in our low and loſt condition, and caſt an eye of pity upon us, when " we were in our blood, and no " other eye pitied us," and when we had loſt and ruined our ſelves, was pleaſed in tender compaſſion to mankind, " to ſend his only begotten Son into " the world to ſeek and ſave us," and by the purity of his doctrine, and the pattern of his life, and the ſacrifice of his death, to purchaſe eternal life for us, and to direct and lead us in the way to it: and to him alſo, the bleſſed SAVIOUR and redeemer of mankind, who came down from heaven, that he might carry us thither, and took human nature upon him, that we thereby might be " made partakers of a di-
" vine nature;" and " humbled himſelf to death,
" even the death of the croſs," that he might exalt us to glory and honour, and whilſt we were bitter enemies to him, gave ſuch a demonſtration of his love to us, as never any man did to his beſt friend: " Unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the
" lamb that was ſlain, to GOD, even our Father,
" and to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the firſt begotten
" from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the
" earth, to him who hath loved us, and waſhed us
" from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made
" us kings and prieſts unto GOD and his Father, to
" him be glory and honour, dominion and power,
" now and for ever. Amen."

SER-

SERMON LXXI.

Preached at St. Peter's Cornhill on the feaſt of the annunciation 1691.

CHRIST JESUS the only mediator between GOD and men.

1 TIM. II. 5, 6.

For there is one GOD, *and one mediator between* GOD *and men, the man* CHRIST JESUS, *who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.*

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The firſt ſermon on this text.

THESE words contain in them theſe four propoſitions; three of them expreſs, and the fourth of them ſufficiently implied in the text.

I. "That there is one GOD."

II. "That there is one mediator between GOD "and men; CHRIST JESUS."

III. "That he gave himſelf a ranſom for all."

IV. "That the mediation or interceſſion of JESUS "CHRIST, is founded in the redemption of man-"kind." For this ſeems to be the reaſon why it is added, that "he gave himſelf a ranſom for all," to ſignify to us, that becauſe "he gave himſelf a ran-"ſom for all," therefore he intercedes for all. In virtue of that ſacrifice which he offered to GOD for the ſalvation of men, he offers up our prayers to GOD: and therefore it is acceptable to him, "that "we ſhould pray for all men." This ſeems to be the true connexion of the apoſtle's diſcourſe, and the force of his reaſoning about our putting up "pub-"lick prayers for all men."

I have

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I have in a former diſcourſe handled the firſt of theſe. I proceed now to the

II. That "there is one mediator between GOD and "men, the man CHRIST JESUS." One mediator, that is, but one; for the expreſſion is the very ſame concerning one GOD, and one mediator; and therefore if the apoſtle when he ſays, "there is one GOD," certainly means that there is but one GOD; it is equally certain, that when he ſays, "there is one "mediator between GOD and men," he means, there is but one mediator, viz. CHRIST JESUS. He is the only mediator between GOD and men.

See a ſermon concerning the unity of the divine nature, printed in the year 1693.

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall proceed in this method.

1. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that GOD hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or interceſſor in heaven for us; in whoſe name, and by whoſe mediation and interceſſion, we are to offer up our prayers and ſervices to GOD.

2. That this is moſt agreeable to our main end and deſign of the chriſtian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world.

3. That it is likewiſe evident from the nature and reaſon of the thing itſelf, that "there is but one "mediator" and interceſſor in heaven for us, to offer up our prayers to GOD; and that there can be no more. And then

4. And laſtly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, how contrary to the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, concerning "one mediator and interceſſor in heaven for "us," the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter is, in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with GOD for ſinners; as likewiſe how contrary it is to the doctrine

and

and practice of the primitive chriſtian church: and then I ſhall anſwer their ſeveral pretences for this doctrine and practice; and ſhew that this practice is not only needleſs, but uſeleſs and unprofitable; and not only ſo, but very dangerous and impious. SERM. LXXI.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that GOD hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or interceſſor in heaven for us, in whoſe name, and by whoſe interceſſion we are to offer up our prayers and ſervices to GOD.

Beſides that it is expreſly ſaid here in the text, "there is but one mediator between GOD and men, "the man CHRIST JESUS," and that the ſcripture no where mentions any other; I ſay, beſides this, we are conſtantly directed to offer up our prayers and thankſgivings, and to perform all acts of worſhip in his name, and no other; and with a promiſe, that the prayers and ſervices, which we offer up in his name, will be graciouſly anſwered and accepted: John xiv. 13, 14. "Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, that "will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the "Son. If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I "will do it." And chap. xvi. 23, 24. "And in "that day ye ſhall aſk me nothing; verily, verily, "I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father "in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have "ye aſked nothing in my name; aſk and ye ſhall "receive, that your joy may be full." In that day, that is, when I have left the world, and am gone to my Father, as he explains it in the 28th verſe, "in that day ye ſhall aſk me nothing; but whatſoe-"ver ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give "it you." That is, you ſhall not need to addreſs your prayers to me, but to my Father in my name. And ver. 26, 27. "At that day ye ſhall aſk in my "name;"

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" name;" that is, from the time that I am aſcended into heaven, ye ſhall put up all your prayers and requeſts to GOD in my name; " and I ſay unto " you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the " Father himſelf loveth you;" that is, I need not tell you (though I ſhall certainly do it) that I will intercede with the Father for you; for he of himſelf is kindly diſpoſed and affected towards you, for my ſake; " the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye " have loved me."

St. Paul likewiſe commands Chriſtians to perform all acts of religious worſhip in the name of CHRIST: Col. iii. 16, 17, " Singing with grace in your hearts " to the LORD, and whatſoever ye do in word and " deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS, " giving thanks to GOD and the Father by him." And giving this precept of addreſſing all our prayers or thankſgivings to GOD, by JESUS CHRIST, as the only mediator between GOD and us, is the more remarkable, becauſe it is given in oppoſition to the worſhipping of GOD by any other mediators and interceſſors in heaven for us; and to that ſuperſtition which had begun ſo early to prevail among ſome Chriſtians at Coloſſe and Laodicea; of worſhipping GOD by the mediation and interceſſion of angels, againſt which he had cautioned in the former chapter, ver. 18, 19. " Let no man beguile you of your " reward in a voluntary humility, and worſhipping " angels, not holding the head." Intimating, that for Chriſtians to addreſs themſelves to GOD, by any other mediator, but JESUS CHRIST only, was a defection from CHRIST " the head," and " high " prieſt of our profeſſion." And that this is the apoſtle's meaning, Theodoret aſſures us, in his comment upon this place, where he tells us, that ſome who

who maintained an obſervance of the law, together with the goſpel, aſſerted alſo, that angels were to be worſhipped; ſaying, "that the law was given by "them." And this cuſtom, he tells us, remained a long time in Phrygia and Piſidia, and that upon this account it was, that the ſynod of Laodicea in Phrygia (about the middle of the fourth century) forbad Chriſtians by a law, to pray to angels. And yet more expreſly in his comment upon thoſe words, chap. iii. 17. "Whatſoever ye do in word or deed, "do all in the name of the LORD JESUS, giving "thanks to GOD and the Father by him." For be- "cauſe (ſays he) they" (meaning thoſe of whom St. Paul warns the Coloſſians to beware) "becauſe "they did command men to worſhip angels, he en- "joins the contrary; that they ſhould adorn both "their words and actions with the memory (or "mention) of the name of CHRIST their LORD: "and ſend ye up (ſaith he) thankſgiving to GOD "and the Father by him, and not by the angels." And then he makes mention of the canon of the ſynod of Laodicea, "which (ſays he) in purſuance of "this rule, and being deſirous to cure that old diſ- "eaſe, made it a law, that none ſhould pray unto "angels, nor forſake the LORD JESUS CHRIST." It ſeems then that ſome relicks of that impious cuſtom, of praying to angels, which Theodoret here calls, "that old diſeaſe," had continued from St. Paul's time, to the council of Laodicea, which was the occaſion of that ſevere canon then made about that matter; the very words whereof I will ſet down, becauſe they are remarkable; viz. "that Chriſtians "ought not to forſake the church of GOD, and go "away from it, and to invocate angels, and to make "conventicles, all which are forbidden. If any there-

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" fore be found giving himſelf to this ſecret idola-
" try, let him be anathema; becauſe he hath for-
" ſaken our LORD JESUS CHRIST the Son of GOD,
" and is gone over to idolatry." What ſhall be ſaid to them, who do not only ſecretly, and in their private devotions, but in the publick aſſemblies of Chriſtians, and in the moſt publick offices of their church, invocate angels, and pray to them? So that it was praying to angels (or making uſe of them as mediators and interceſſors with GOD for us) which St. Paul here reproves ſo ſeverely in the Coloſſians, as a defection from CHRIST and the chriſtian religion.

And indeed, conſidering how frequently the ſcripture ſpeaks of CHRIST, as " our only way to GOD, " and by whom alone we have acceſs to the throne " of grace," we cannot doubt, but that GOD hath conſtituted him our only mediator and interceſſor, by whom we are to addreſs all our requeſts to GOD, John xiv. 6. JESUS there ſaith unto Thomas, " I " am the way, the truth and the life; no man com-
" eth to the father but by me." " I am the way, " the truth, and the life," that is, the true and living way to the father (which the apoſtle calls " a new " and living way," Heb. x. 19, 20. " Having there-
" fore boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood " of JESUS, by a new and living way which he hath " conſecrated for us.") " No man cometh to the " Father but by me;" that is, we can have no acceſs to GOD by prayer, or by any other acts of religious worſhip, but by him. So St. Paul tells us, Eph. ii. 18. " For through him (ſpeaking of CHRIST) " we both have an acceſs by one ſpirit unto the Fa-
" ther." We both, that is, both Jews and Gentiles. Under the law the Jews had acceſs to GOD

by

by their high prieſt, who interceded with GOD, and offered up prayers in behalf of the people. The Gentiles, they addreſſed themſelves to God by innumerable mediators, by angels, and the ſouls of their departed heroes, which were the pagan ſaints. Inſtead of all theſe, GOD hath appointed one mediator and interceſſor in heaven for us, "JESUS the Son of "GOD, and by "him all mankind," both Jews and Gentiles, "have acceſs by one ſpirit unto the Father." SERM LXXI.

And we have no need of any other, as the apoſtle to the Hebrews reaſons, chap. vii. 24, 25. "But "this perſon (ſpeaking of CHRIST) becauſe he conti- "nueth for ever, hath an unchangeable prieſthood, "ἀπαράβατον, a prieſthood which doth not paſs "from one to another," as the prieſthood under the law did, when upon the death of one high prieſt, another ſucceeded in his place; but our high prieſt under the goſpel, "ſince he abides for ever, is able to "ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to GOD "by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion "for us." So that JESUS CHRIST is an all-ſufficient mediator, and able to carry on and accompliſh the work of our ſalvation from firſt to laſt: and as we do not find, that GOD hath appointed any other; ſo we are ſure, that there needs no other, "ſince he "is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come "to GOD by him, and that he lives for ever to "make interceſſion for us."

Secondly, I proceed now in the ſecond place, to ſhew, that this doctrine or principle of "one media- "tor between GOD and man," is moſt agreeable to one main end and deſign of the chriſtian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, which was "to deſtroy idolatry out of the world;" which St. John calls "the works of the devil," 1 John

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iii. 8. "for this purpoſe the Son of GOD was mani-
"feſted, that he might deſtroy, ἵνα λύσῃ, that he
"might diſſolve or demoliſh the works of the devil;"
by which St. John does more eſpecially mean the
idolatrous worſhip of the heathen, which conſiſted
in the multitude of their gods and the bloody and
barbarous rites and ſacrifices, whereby they worſhip-
ped them; and likewiſe in the multitude of their me-
diators between the gods and men, who were alſo
eſteemed by them an inferior ſort of deities. Both
theſe kinds of idolatry had ſtrangely prevailed, and
over-run the world, before the appearance of our
LORD and SAVIOUR, who came on purpoſe to de-
liver mankind from the horrible ſuperſtition and ſla-
very of the worſhip of falſe gods, to pull down this
kingdom of the devil, and to demoliſh that fabrick
which he had been ſo long a rearing, and to beat
him out of thoſe ſtrong holds, which he thought
had been impregnable.

GOD indeed gave ſome check to theſe, many ages
before, and not long after their firſt appearance, by
the Jewiſh religion, which was on purpoſe intro-
duced, and confirmed, and eſtabliſhed by ſo many and
ſuch mighty miracles to preſerve and keep alive in
the world the primitive tradition and belief "of the
"one true GOD;" and likewiſe to be (as it were)
ſome ſhadow and rude draught of that more perfect
diſpenſation of the chriſtian religion which by "one
"ſacrifice once offered," and by "one mediator
"between GOD and men," was to put an end to
the infinite ſuperſtitions of the heathen worſhip, and
all the bloody and barbarous rites of it, and likewiſe
to the idolatry they were guilty of, in the worſhip
of their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as
a middle ſort of powers between the gods and men,
and

and therefore addreſſed themſelves to them, as me- SERM.
diators between the ſuperior and heavenly gods, and LXXI.
men here on earth. This was plainly one of the great deſigns of the chriſtian religion; and therefore it concerns Chriſtians to underſtand it, and to be very careful, that they do not ſuffer themſelves to be deluded by any ſpecious pretences whatſoever, to bring theſe things back again into the chriſtian religion, for the ruin and extirpation whereof, it was purpoſely deſigned and intended.

And this ſeems plainly to be the meaning of that caution, wherewith St. John concludes his catholick or general epiſtle, namely, that Chriſtians ſhould be very careful, that they were not carried back again into the heathen idolatry, by the confident pretences of the Gnoſtick hereticks to higher degrees of knowledge and illumination, than other Chriſtians had: that is, by their pretending to be "the infallible "church, and the only true and genuine Chriſtians." For it is, againſt this ſect, that this epiſtle is plainly deſigned, which St. John thus concludes, chap. v. from ver. 18. to the end; "we know that whoſo- "ever is born of GOD ſinneth not;" meaning that he doth not commit the "ſin unto death," which he had ſpoken of juſt before, viz. apoſtaſy from chriſtianity to the heathen idolatry, or that which was very like it) "whoſoever is born of GOD doth "not commit this ſin, but he that is begotten of "GOD, keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one touch- "eth him not;" that is, he preſerveth himſelf from the contagion of idolatry into which the devil was ſo buſy to ſeduce mankind. "And we know that "we are of GOD;" that is, do belong to the true GOD, and are worſhippers of him: "and the whole world lyeth in wickedneſs, "ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, is in

SERM. LXXI. the power, or under the dominion of that wicked one;" that is, the greateſt part of mankind was ſunk into idolatry, and the worſhip of the devil. "And "we know that the Son of GOD is come, and hath "given us an underſtanding, that we may know "him that is true." We know, that is, we Chriſtians are better taught by the chriſtian religion, to acknowledge and worſhip the only true GOD: "and "we are in him that is true, in" or "by his Son JE-"SUS CHRIST;" that is, we worſhip the only true GOD, by his Son JESUS CHRIST. And then he concludes, "little children keep yourſelves from idols;" intimating hereby, that the worſhipping of any other, beſides this only true GOD, and by any other mediator than JESUS CHRIST, is idolatry.

There were indeed two very ancient and common notions, both amongſt Jews and Gentiles, of the original whereof it is hard to give any certain account; only this is certain, that they did prevail very early, and did very generally poſſeſs mankind; and they were theſe; firſt, that GOD was not to be appeaſed towards ſinners, merely upon their repentance, without the death and ſuffering of ſome other in their ſtead; and that GOD would accept of this vicarious puniſhment and ſuffering, inſtead of the death of the ſinner himſelf. And this ſeems to have given the original to the ſacrifices of living creatures, to appeaſe the wrath of GOD towards ſinners, which in proceſs of time, as the worſhip of falſe GODS prevailed in the world, did proceed to that degree of ſuperſtition and barbarous inhumanity, that by the inſtigation of the devil, men offered up the blood of their children, and ſacrificed their ſons and daughters to their idols and falſe gods. Secondly, another common notion, which had likewiſe poſſeſſed mankind,

kind, was, that GOD was not to be immediately ap- SERM. proached by ſinful men, but that their prayers were LXXI. to be offered up to the deity, by certain mediators and interceſſors, that were to procure for them the favour of the gods, and the gracious anſwer and acceptance of their prayers. And this was the original of that other ſort of heathen idolatry, which conſiſted in the worſhip of their demons and heroes, that is, of angels and ſouls departed, viz. of ſuch eminent perſons, as had been great benefactors to mankind, and for their worthy deeds upon earth were canonized and tranſlated into the number of their inferior gods. By theſe, as the chief courtiers and favourites of heaven, they addreſſed their prayers and ſupplications to the ſuperior gods.

Now with theſe notions which had generally poſſeſſed mankind (how imperfect ſoever) GOD was pleaſed to comply ſo far, as in the frame of the Jewiſh religion (which was deſigned for a type of the more perfect inſtitution of the chriſtian religion, and a preparation for it) I ſay, GOD was pleaſed to comply ſo far with theſe notions, as to appoint ſacrifices to be ſlain and offered up for the ſinner; and likewiſe "an high prieſt, that once a year ſhould enter into "the holy of holies, with the blood of ſacrifices" that were offered up for the people to make expiation for them, and in virtue of that blood, "ſhould "intercede for the people," as the apoſtle to the Hebrews does declare at large. And when "GOD "ſent his Son in the fulneſs of time," he was pleaſed likewiſe, in the diſpenſation of the goſpel, (that perfect inſtitution which was never to be altered) to have ſo much regard to theſe common notions, and apprehenſions of mankind, as to provide for the ſupply of thoſe two great wants, which they ſeemed al-

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ways to have laboured under, and concerning which they were at ſo great a loſs, viz. an effectual expiatory ſacrifice for ſins upon earth, and a powerful mediator and interceſſor with GOD in heaven: and both theſe by the ſame perſon, "JESUS CHRIST, who "appeared in the end of the world, to take away "ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf;" and in the merit and virtue of that ſacrifice, "appearing in heaven "in the preſence of GOD for us," is become a perpetual advocate, and a moſt powerful interceſſor with GOD in heaven for us. So that inſtead of the endleſs ſacrifices of the Jewiſh religion, which were ineffectual to the real expiation of ſin, and only types and ſhadows of the true expiatory ſacrifice; and inſtead of the bloody and inhuman ſacrifices of the heathen idolatry; the Son of GOD hath "by one ſacri-"fice for ſin once offered, perfected for ever them "that are ſanctified, and obtained eternal redemp-"tion for us." And inſtead of the mediation of angels, and the ſouls of their departed heroes, which the heathen made uſe of to offer up their prayers to the gods; we have "one mediator between GOD "and men," appointed by GOD himſelf, "JESUS "the Son of GOD," who in our nature is aſcended into heaven, "to appear in the preſence of God for "us." And who ſo fit to be our patron and advocate, as he who was our ſacrifice and propitiation?

Thus the method of our redemption, as it was by the wiſdom of GOD admirably ſuited to the common apprehenſions of mankind, concerning the neceſſity of a ſacrifice to make expiation of ſin, and of a mediator to intercede with GOD for ſinners; ſo was it likewiſe excellently fitted, not only to put an end to the Jewiſh ſacrifices, but likewiſe to aboliſh the barbarous ſacrifices and rites of the heathen idolatry,

and

and to caſhier that infinite number of mediators and interceſſors, by whom they addreſſed their prayers to the deity; and inſtead of all this, to introduce a more reaſonable and ſpiritual worſhip, more agreeable to the nature and perfections of GOD, and the reaſon of mankind; which was one of the main and principal deſigns of the chriſtian religion: and therefore to bring in any other mediators, to intercede in heaven for us (whether angels or ſaints) and by them to offer up our prayers to GOD, is directly contrary to the deſign of the chriſtian religion. SERM. LXXI.

Thirdly, it is likewiſe evident from the nature and reaſon of the thing itſelf, that "there is but one me-"diator" and interceſſor in heaven, who offers up our prayers to GOD, and that there can be no more. Becauſe under the goſpel there being but one high prieſt, and but one ſacrifice once offered for ſin, and interceſſion for ſinners being founded in the merit and virtue of the ſacrifice, by which expiation for ſin is made, there can be no other mediator of interceſſion, but he who hath made expiation of ſin, by a ſacrifice offered to GOD for that purpoſe; and this JESUS CHRIST only hath done. He is both our high prieſt, and our ſacrifice; and therefore he only, in the merit and virtue of that ſacrifice, which he offered upon earth, can intercede in heaven for us, and offer up our prayers to GOD. Others may pray to GOD for us; as our brethren upon earth do, and perhaps the angels and ſaints in heaven; but none of theſe can offer up our prayers to GOD, and procure the acceptance of them; for that can only be done in virtue of a ſacrifice firſt offered, and by him that offered it; this being the peculiar office and qualification of a mediator or interceſſor, properly ſo called.

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It is the plain deſign of the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, to prove that CHRIST is our only mediator in heaven, in virtue of that ſacrifice for ſin, which he offered upon earth; and that he alone "appears in the preſence of GOD for us," to preſent our requeſts to him, and obtain a gracious anſwer of them; and he ſhews at large, how this was particularly typified by the Jewiſh high prieſt, who upon the great day of expiation, after the ſacrifice was ſlain without, "entered alone into the holy of holies, "with the blood of the ſacrifices," in virtue whereof he "made interceſſion for the people." Anſwerably to this, "JESUS the high prieſt of our profeſ-"ſion, offered himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſins of "men, and, in virtue of that ſacrifice "is entered into "the high place not made with hands, that is, into "heaven itſelf, there to appear in the preſence of "GOD for us, where he lives for ever to make inter-"ceſſion for us," in virtue of that "eternal redemp-"tion, which he hath obtained for us," by the price of his blood, as the apoſtle declares in ſeveral chapters of that epiſtle. So that this interceſſion being founded in the merit of a ſacrifice, which he alone offered, he is of neceſſity, "the only mediator be-"tween GOD and men."

And for this reaſon it is, that the mediation and interceſſion of CHRIST, is ſo frequently in ſcripture mentioned together with the expiation which he made for the ſins of men, or, (which is the ſame,) with the price which he paid for the redemption of mankind; becauſe the one is founded in the other, and depends upon it. So we find, 1 John ii. 1, 2. "If "any man ſin we have an advocate with the Father, "JESUS CHRIST the righteous, and he is the pro-"pitiation for our ſins; and not for ours only, but

"alſo

"alſo for the ſins of the whole world." And here likewiſe in the text, "there is one mediator between "GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS, who gave "himſelf a ranſom for all;" therefore "the only me- "diator between GOD and men;" becauſe "he only "gave himſelf a ranſom for all" men. The efficacy and prevalency of his mediation, being founded in the merit and virtue of the ranſom of his blood. SERM. LXXI.

And the force of theſe texts, and this reaſoning from them, is not to be avoided and turned off, by diſtinguiſhing between a mediator of redemption and of interceſſion, and by ſaying, that it is true, that CHRIST is the only mediator of redemption, but there may be many mediators of interceſſion: for if the force of his being advocate or interceſſor be founded in the virtue of his ranſom and propitiation (as I have plainly ſhewn, to the conviction of any that are not ſtrongly prejudiced, and that will read and conſider what the ſcripture ſays in this matter without prepoſſeſſion,) then it is plain, that none can be a proper mediator of interceſſion, but he that paid the price of our redemption: ſo that the mediator of our redemption, and our mediator of interceſſion, muſt of neceſſity be one and the ſame perſon; and none can appear in the quality of "our "advocate with the Father," but he only who is "the propitiation for the ſins of the whole world."

I ſhould now have proceeded to

The fourth thing I propoſed in the handling of this argument, namely, to ſhew how contrary to this doctrine of the chriſtian religion, concerning "one "only mediator and interceſſor in heaven for us" the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is in this matter; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, and flying to their

their help and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with GOD for ſinners: as likewiſe how contrary all this is to the doctrine and practice of the chriſtian church, for ſeveral of the firſt ages of it. And then I ſhould have anſwered their chief pretences and excuſes for theſe things, and ſhewed that this practice of theirs is not only needleſs (being no where commanded of GOD) but uſeleſs alſo, and unprofitable; and not only ſo, but very dangerous and impious, being contrary to the chriſtian religion, and highly derogating from the virtue and merit of CHRIST's ſacrifice, and from the honour of "the only mediator between GOD and men." But of this another time.

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CHRIST JESUS, the only mediator between GOD and men.

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1 TIM. II. 5. 6.

For there is one GOD, *and one mediator between* GOD *and men, the man* CHRIST JESUS; *who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.*

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IN theſe words are four propoſitions; three expreſſed, and the fourth implied.

I. That there is one GOD.

II. That there is one mediator between GOD and men; CHRIST JESUS.

III. That

III. That he gave himſelf a ranſom for all. SERM. LXXII.

IV. That the mediation or interceſſion of JESUS CHRIST, is founded in his redemption of mankind: that becauſe "he gave himſelf a ranſom for all "men," therefore he, and he only, is qualified to intercede for all men, in virtue of that ſacrifice which he offered for the ſalvation of all mankind.

The ſecond of theſe I ſpake to the laſt time, and endeavoured to ſhew,

1. That GOD hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or interceſſor in heaven for us; by whoſe mediation we are to offer up all our prayers and ſervices to GOD.

2. That this doctrine of one mediator is moſt agreeable to one main end and deſign of the chriſtian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, which was, to deſtroy idolatry.

3. That from the nature and reaſon of the thing (viz. becauſe interceſſion for ſinners is founded in the merit of that ſacrifice, by which expiation of ſin is made) there can be no other mediator of interceſſion, but he who hath made expiation for ſin, by a ſacrifice offered to GOD for that purpoſe; and this JESUS CHRIST only hath done. Thus far I have gone: I proceed now to

The fourth thing which I propoſed in the handling of this argument, namely, to ſhew how contrary to this doctrine of the chriſtian religion, concerning one only mediator and interceſſor in heaven for us, the doctrine and the practice of the church of Rome is in this matter; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints and flying to their help, and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with GOD for ſinners.

And

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And that I may proceed more diſtinctly in this argument, I ſhall handle it under theſe particular heads.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter, is contrary to the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, concerning one only mediator and interceſſor in heaven for us.

Secondly, that it is contrary to the doctrine and practice of the chriſtian church, for ſeveral of the firſt ages of it.

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to anſwer their chief pretences and excuſes for this doctrine and practice.

Fourthly, to ſhew that this doctrine and practice of theirs is not only needleſs, being no where commanded by GOD, but uſeleſs alſo, and unprofitable.

Fifthly, and not only ſo, but very dangerous and impious; becauſe contrary to the chriſtian religion, and greatly derogating from the virtue and merit of CHRIST's ſacrifice, and from the honour of "the "only mediator between GOD and men.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter, is contrary to the doctrine of the chriſtian religion concerning one only mediator and interceſſor in heaven for us; namely in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, and flying to their help, and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with GOD for ſinners.

That JESUS CHRIST is our only mediator and interceſſor with GOD in heaven, by whom we have acceſs to GOD in any action of religious worſhip, and that all our prayers and ſervices are to be offered up to GOD only by him, and in his name and mediation, and no other, I have plainly ſhewed from ſcrip-

ſcripture, and proved it by an invincible argument, taken likewiſe from ſcripture; namely, becauſe the efficacy and prevalency of his mediation and interceſſion is founded in the virtue and merit of his ſacrifice; and that he is therefore "the only mediator "between GOD and men," becauſe "he only gave "himſelf a ranſom for all;" he is therefore "our "only advocate with the Father," becauſe "he "only is the propitiation for our ſins, and for the "ſins of the whole world." SERM. LXXII.

I have ſhewed likewiſe, that the ſcripture excludes angels from being our mediators with GOD, from the main ſcope and deſign of the epiſtle to the Coloſſians; and much more are the ſaints departed excluded from this office, being inferior to the angels, not only in the dignity and excellency of their beings, but very probably in the degree of their knowledge.

In ſhort, prayer is a proper act of religious worſhip, and therefore peculiar to GOD alone; and we are commanded "to worſhip the LORD our GOD, "and to ſerve him only:" and no where in ſcripture are we directed to addreſs our prayers and ſupplications and thankſgivings to any but GOD alone, and only in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR himſelf hath taught us, to put up all our prayers to GOD our heavenly Father, Luke xi. 2. "when you pray, ſay, Our "Father which art in heaven." Which plainly ſhews, to whom all our prayers are to be addreſſed; and unleſs we can call an angel, or the bleſſed virgin, or a ſaint, our father, we can pray to none of them. And elſewhere he as plainly directs us, by whom we are to apply our ſelves to GOD, and in whoſe name and mediation we are to put up all our requeſts to him. John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth,

"and

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" and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but " by me." And then it follows, ver. 13, 14. " And " whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, that will I " do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. " If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do " it." Nothing is clearer in the whole bible, than " one mediator between GOD and men, CHRIST " JESUS," and that he is our only advocate and interceſſor with GOD in heaven for us.

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome, in this matter, is contrary to that of the chriſtian church, for ſeveral of the firſt ages of it.

As for the ages of the apoſtles, it hath been already proved out of their writings. That it was not practiſed in the three firſt ages, we have the acknowledgment of cardinal Perron, and others of their learned writers; and they give a very remarkable reaſon for it; namely, becauſe the worſhip and invocation of ſaints and angels, and addreſſing our prayers to GOD by them, might have ſeemed to have given countenance to the heathen idolatry. From whence I cannot forbear, by the way, to make theſe two obſervations. 1. That the invocation of ſaints and angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and addreſſing ourſelves to GOD by their mediation, was not in thoſe primitive ages eſteemed a duty of the chriſtian religion; becauſe, if it had, it could not have been omitted for fear of the ſcandal conſequent upon it: and if it was not a duty then, by what authority or law, can it be made ſo ſince? 2. That this practice is very liable to the ſuſpicion of idolatry; and ſurely every Chriſtian cannot but think it fit, that the church of CHRIST ſhould, like a chaſte ſpouſe, not only be free from the crime, but from all ſuſpicion of idolatry.

And

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And for the next ages after the apoſtles, nothing is plainer, than that both their doctrine and practice were contrary to the doctrine and practice of the preſent church of Rome in this matter. The moſt ancient fathers of the chriſtian church do conſtantly define prayer, to be "an addreſs to GOD;" and therefore it cannot be made to any but GOD only; and after the riſe of Arianiſm, they argued for the divinity of CHRIST, againſt the Arians, from our praying to him; which argument were of no force, if prayers might be made to any but GOD; and this was in the beginning of the fourth age.

And we no where find any mention of thoſe diſtinctions, of gods by nature, and gods by participation (as Bellarmine calls the angels and ſaints) or of a ſupreme and inferior religious worſhip; or of a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of interceſſion; which are ſo commonly made uſe of by the church of Rome in this controverſy.

And which is as conſiderable as any of the reſt, the ancient fathers were generally of opinion, that the ſaints were not admitted to the beatific viſion, till after the day of judgment; and this is acknowledged by the moſt learned of the church of Rome. But this very opinion takes away the foundation of praying to ſaints; becauſe the church of Rome grounds it upon their reigning with CHRIST in heaven, and upon the light and knowledge which is communicated to them in the beatific viſion; and if ſo, then they who believed the ſaints not yet to be admitted to this viſion, could have no reaſon or ground to pray to them.

And laſtly, the ancient church prayed for ſaints departed, and for the bleſſed virgin herſelf; and therefore could not pray to them, as interceſſors for them

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them in heaven, for whom they themſelves interceded upon earth. And therefore the church of Rome, in compliance with the change which they have made in their doctrine, have changed the miſſal in that point, and inſtead of praying for St. Leo (one of their popes) as they were wont to do in their ancient miſſal, in this form, Grant, O LORD, that this oblation may be profitable to the ſoul of thy ſervant Leo; the collect is now changed in the preſent Roman miſſal into this form, Grant, O LORD, that by the interceſſion of bleſſed Leo, this offering may be profitable to us. And (as the gloſs upon the canon law obſerves) this change was made in their miſſal upon very good reaſon; becauſe anciently they prayed for Leo, but now they pray to him; which is an ingenuous acknowledgment, that both the doctrine and practice of their church are plainly changed, from what they anciently were in this matter.

What the doctrines and practices of the church of Rome are in this matter, all the world ſees, and they themſelves are ſo aſhamed of them, that of late all their endeavours have been, to repreſent them otherwiſe than in truth they are, and to obtrude upon us a new popery, which they think themſelves better able to defend than the old; which yet they have not ſhewn, that they are ſo well able to do; and therefore now, inſtead of defending the true doctrines and practices of their own church, they would fain mince and diſguiſe them, and change them into ſomething that comes nearer to the proteſtant doctrine in thoſe points; as if they had no way to defend their own doctrines, but by ſeeming to deſert them, and by bringing them as near to ours as poſſibly they can.

But take them, as they have mollified them and pared them, to render them more plauſible and tena-

ble; that which ſtill remains of them, I mean "the "ſolemn invocation of ſaints and angels, as media- "tors and interceſſors with GOD in heaven for us," is plainly contrary both to the doctrine and practice of the primitive ages of chriſtianity. SERM. LXXII.

As for the age of the apoſtles, I have already ſhewn it; and the matter is as clear for ſeveral of the next following ages, as I ſhall briefly ſhew, from a few very plain teſtimonies.

In the next age to the apoſtles, we have an epiſtle of one of the ſeven churches, (I mean the church of Smyrna) in which, in vindication of themſelves from that calumny which was raiſed againſt them by the Jews, among the heathen, "that if they permitted "the Chriſtians to have the body of the martyred "Polycarp, they would leave CHRIST to worſhip "Polycarp;" I ſay, in vindication of themſelves from this calumny, they declare themſelves thus, "Not knowing (ſay they) that we can neither leave "CHRIST, who ſuffered for the ſalvation of the "world of thoſe that are ſaved, nor worſhip any "other;" or, (as it is in the old Latin tranſlation) "nor offer up the ſupplication of prayer to any "other perſon; for as for JESUS CHRIST, we adore "him, as being the Son of GOD; but as for the "martyrs, we love them, as the diſciples and imi- "tators of the LORD." So that they plainly exclude the ſaints from any ſort of religious worſhip, of which prayer or invocation was always eſteemed a very conſiderable part.

Irenæus likewiſe tells us, (lib. 2.) that "the "church doth nothing" (ſpeaking of the miracles which were wrought) "by the invocation of angels, "nor by inchantment, nor by any other wicked "arts; but by prayers to the LORD who made all

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" things, and by calling on the name of our LORD " JESUS CHRIST." Here all invocation of angels, and by the ſame or greater reaſon, of the ſaints, is excluded. And Clemens Alexandrinus delivers it as the doctrine of the church; that " ſince there is but " one good GOD, therefore both we and the angels " pray to him, both for the giving, and the con- " tinuance of good things.

In the next age, Origen is ſo full and expreſs in this matter, that it is not poſſible for any proteſtant to ſpeak more poſitively and clearly, lib. 8. cont. Celſum, where he does on ſet purpoſe declare and vindicate the chriſtian doctrine and practice in this matter; " We worſhip (ſays he) the one only GOD, " and his one only Son, and Word, and image, with " our utmoſt ſupplications and honours, bringing " our prayers to the GOD of all things, through his " only begotten Son:" and afterwards, " away, " (ſays he) with Celſus his council, that ſays, we " muſt pray to demons (or angels) for we muſt pray " only to GOD who is above all; we muſt pray to " the only begotten and firſt-born of every creature, " and we muſt beſeech him to offer up our prayers " which we make to him, to his GOD, and our GOD:" and again (ſpeaking of angels) " as for the favour " of others (if that be to be regarded) we know, " that thouſands of thouſands ſtand before him, " and ten thouſand times ten thouſand miniſter unto " him; theſe are our brethren and friends, who when " they ſee us imitating their piety towards GOD, " work together to the ſalvation of thoſe who call " upon GOD, and pray as they ought to do," that is, to GOD only; and (l. 5.) where Celſus urges him with this, that the ſcriptures call angels gods, he tells him, " that the ſcriptures do not call the angels gods,

" with any deſign to require us to worſhip and adore SERM. LXXII.
" them inſtead of GOD, who are miniſtring ſpirits,
" and bring meſſages, and bleſſings down to us from
" GOD; for (ſays he) all ſupplications, and prayer,
" and interceſſion, and giving of thanks, muſt be
" ſent up to GOD, who is above all, by the high
" prieſt, who is above all angels, and is the living
" Word and GOD." And though angels be only here mentioned, yet by the ſame reaſon, all other creatures are excluded, from being the objects of our religious worſhip and invocation, or, mediators of interceſſion with GOD for us; becauſe all ſupplication and prayer, and interceſſion, and thankſgiving, muſt be ſent up to GOD by our high prieſt, who is the living Word and GOD. " Let us then alſo (as
" he goes on) make ſupplication to the Word him-
" ſelf, and interceſſion, and giving of thanks and
" prayer: but to invocate angels is not reaſonable;
" ſince we do not comprehend the knowledge of
" them, which is above us; and if we could com-
" prehend the knowledge of them, which is won-
" derful and ſecret, this very knowledge which de-
" clares to us their nature and office, would not al-
" low us to preſume to pray to any other, but to
" the GOD who is LORD over all, and abundantly ſuf-
" ficient for all, by our SAVIOUR the Son of GOD."
Where he gives two plain reaſons, why we ought to pray only to GOD, and to offer up our prayers only by the mediation of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD and our SAVIOUR: firſt, becauſe he only is LORD over all, and therefore the worſhip of prayer is to be given to him only. And then, ſecondly, becauſe we have no need of any other patron and benefactor, or of any other mediator and advocate, " he is abun-
" dantly ſufficient for all, by our SAVIOUR the Son
" of GOD.

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In the ſame age Novatian, in his book concerning the Trinity, makes uſe of this argument, to prove the divinity of CHRIST; becauſe he hears our prayers, when we call upon him. "If CHRIST, "(ſays he) be only a man, how can he be preſent "every where to thoſe that call upon him? ſince "this is not the nature of man, but of GOD, to be "able to be preſent every where? If CHRIST be "only a man, why do we in our prayers call upon "him as mediator; ſince prayer to a man is deemed "ineffectual to help or ſave us? if CHRIST be only "man, why do we put our hope in him; ſince hope "in man is accurſed in ſcripture?"

In the IVth century, the apoſtolical conſtitutions, under the name of Clemens Romanus (but undoubtedly written in that age) give us a pregnant negative teſtimony in this matter; for though a great many of the publick prayers are there ſet down at large, yet they are all directed to GOD alone, and not the leaſt intimation there of any prayer made to the angels or ſaints, or even to the virgin Mary; nor of their interceſſion or aid; which now make ſo great a part of the publick devotions of the church of Rome.

Athanaſius, in his fourth oration againſt the Arians, proves the unity of the Father and the Son, from 1 Theſ. iii. 11. "Now GOD himſelf, and our LORD JESUS CHRIST, direct our way unto you." From whence he argues thus, "One would not pray to "receive any thing from the Father and the angels, "or from any other creature; nor would one ſay, "GOD and the angels give thee this; but one would "pray to receive any thing from the Father and the "Son, becauſe of their unity and uniform gift; for "all things that are given by the Father, are given

"by

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" by the Son, and there is nothing which the Father " doth not work by the Son;" and then concludes, " that it doth not belong to any, but to GOD alone, " to bleſs and grant deliverances." This I take to be a very remarkable teſtimony againſt the church of Rome, who in their publick offices join the bleſſed virgin with GOD, and our SAVIOUR, in the ſame breath, and ſometimes put her before her Son; let Mary and her Son bleſs us; as it is in the office of the bleſſed virgin; in direct contradiction to what I juſt now cited out of Athanaſius; and nothing ſo common in their mouths, as *Jeſu Maria*, Jeſus and Mary; nothing more frequent in their moſt eminent writers, than to join them together in their doxologies and thankſgivings, " Glory be to GOD, and the " bleſſed virgin, and to JESUS CHRIST," ſays Gregory de Valencia. And Bellarmine himſelf concludes his diſputations concerning the worſhip of ſaints; in theſe words, " Praiſe be to GOD, and to the bleſſed " virgin mother Mary; likewiſe to JESUS CHRIST, " the eternal Son of the eternal Father, be praiſe and " glory." And in the very Roman miſſal itſelf, they make confeſſion of their ſins " to GOD Almighty, " and the bleſſed virgin Mary, to St. Michael the " archangel, and to all the ſaints." And in their abſolution, they join together " the paſſion of our " LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the merits of the " bleſſed virgin, and of all the ſaints, for the remiſ- " ſion of ſins." And is not this the very thing which Athanaſius doth ſo ſeverely condemn?

I have mentioned before the council of Laodicea, which about the middle of this century condemns the worſhip of angels, and praying to them, as downright idolatry, and towards the end of this fourth age, and in the beginning of the fifth, when it is

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pretended that praying to ſaints did begin (though it was rather by way of apoſtrophe and rhetorical addreſs, than of formal invocation) there are expreſs teſtimonies againſt it of the moſt eminent fathers of that time. I will inſtance but in three, Epiphanius, St. Chryſoſtom, and St. Auguſtine.

Epiphanius, in his confutation of the hereſy of the Collyrians (which he calls the hereſy of the women, becauſe they firſt began the worſhip of the virgin Mary) declares moſt expreſly againſt the worſhip of any creature whatſoever; "for neither (ſays he) is "Elias to be worſhipped, though he is reckoned "among the living," (meaning that he was taken up into heaven, body and ſoul) "nor John, nor any "other of the ſaints" and as for the virgin Mary, he particularly adds, "that if GOD will not have us "to worſhip the angels, how much more would he "not have us to worſhip her that was born of "Anna?" And concludes, "let Mary be had in "honour; but let the LORD be worſhipped."

St. Chryſoſtom, in a long diſcourſe, perſuades men to addreſs their prayers immediately to GOD, and not as we addreſs ourſelves to great men by their officers and favourites; and tells us "that there is no "need of ſuch interceſſors with GOD, who is not ſo "ready to grant our petitions, when we entreat him "by others, as when we pray to him ourſelves."

Laſtly, St. Auguſtine, "becauſe the ſcriptures pro-"nounce him accurſed, that putteth his truſt in "man;" from thence he argues, that "therefore "we ought not to aſk of any other, but of our "LORD GOD, either the grace to do well, or the "reward of it." The contrary to which I am ſure is done in ſeveral of the publick prayers uſed in the church of Rome. And, lib. 22. de civ. Dei, he expreſly

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preſly tells us, that "the names of the martyrs were "recited in their prayers at the altar: but they were "not invocated by the prieſt who did celebrate di-"vine ſervice." And in the third council of Carthage (which was in St. Auguſtine's time) "it is "enjoined (can. 33.) that all prayers that were "made at the altar, ſhould be directed to the Father." Which how it is obſerved in the church of Rome, we all know.

To conclude this matter, it cannot be made appear, that there were any prayers to ſaints in the publick offices of the church, till towards the end of the eighth century. For in the year 754. the invocation of ſaints was condemned by a council of 338 biſhops at Conſtantinople, as is acknowledged by the ſecond council of Nice, which firſt eſtabliſhed this ſuperſtition, in the year 787, and this very council was condemned ſeven years after, in a council at Frankfort, and declared void, and to be no otherwiſe eſteemed of, than the council of Ariminum.

Thus you ſee, when this doctrine and practice, ſo contrary to the doctrine and practice of a great many of the firſt ages of the chriſtian church, was firſt eſtabliſhed, namely, at the ſame time with the worſhip of images, and when the firſt foundation of tranſubſtantiation was laid; which as they began at the ſame time, ſo they are very fit to go together.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the next thing which I propoſed, namely, to anſwer the chief pretences which are made for this doctrine and practice. But of that in the following diſcourſe.

SERMON LXXIII.

CHRIST JESUS the only mediator between GOD and men.

1 TIM. II. 5, 6.

For there is one GOD, *and one mediator between* GOD *and men, the man* CHRIST JESUS; *who gave himself a ranſom for all.*

SERM. LXXIII. The third ſermon on this text.

IN the two former diſcourſes upon this text, I have treated on the ſecond propoſition I laid down from the words; viz. "that there is but one "mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST "JESUS." In treating of this propoſition, I ſhewed,

Firſt, that it is agreeable to ſcripture.

Secondly, that it is agreeable to one great end and deſign of the chriſtian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, which was to deſtroy idolatry out of it.

Thirdly, that from the nature and reaſon of the thing, there can be but one mediator or interceſſor in heaven with GOD for ſinners; and that he can be no other than JESUS CHRIST.

Fourthly, I ſhewed how contrary to this doctrine, the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is, in their invocation of angels, and the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints, and making uſe of their mediation and interceſſion with GOD for ſinners.

This I endeavoured to do, by ſhewing, 1ſt, How contrary this is to the doctrine of the ſcriptures.

2dly,

2dly, How contrary to the doctrine and practice of the church, for ſeveral of the firſt ages of it. And thus far I have gone. SERM. LXXIII.

I proceed now in the 3d place, to anſwer the chief pretences and excuſes which are made by thoſe of the church of Rome, for this doctrine and practice.

As, 1. That they only ſay, that it is lawful to pray to angels and ſaints; but do not enjoin and require it. To this I anſwer two things.

(1.) In ſaying that it is lawful to pray to ſaints and angels (if they went no farther) they ſay, that which they can never make good; becauſe prayer is an act of religious worſhip, and peculiar and proper to GOD only, and therefore cannot be given to any creature, angel, or ſaint. This I have proved from ſcripture, where our SAVIOUR commands us, "when "we pray, to ſay, Our Father which art in heaven;" that is, to direct and addreſs our prayers to GOD only. And St. Paul likewiſe forbids the worſhipping angels by invocating of them, and making uſe of them as mediators between GOD and us, in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians; which Theodoret expreſly interprets concerning the invocation of angels, and applying our ſelves to them, as mediators and interceſſors with GOD in heaven for us. And the council of Laodicea declares this practice to be idolatry. Beſides that the ancient fathers of the chriſtian church, for above three hundred years, never ſpake of praying to any, but GOD only; and do expreſly condemn the invocation of angels, much more of the ſaints, who are inferior to them; and therefore they always define prayer to be an addreſs to GOD, a converſing and diſcourſing with GOD; which would be a falſe definition of prayer, if it were lawful to pray to any but to GOD only. All which conſidered, one may juſtly

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juſtly wonder at the confidence of ſome men, who would have it taken for granted, without any proof, that the invocation of ſaints and angels is lawful.

(2.) If it were true, that it is lawful to pray to angels and ſaints; it is not true, that the church of Rome does only declare it to be lawful, but does not require and enjoin it; as ſome of their late writers pretend.

With what face can this be ſaid, when there are ſo many prayers to angels and ſaints, and eſpecially to the bleſſed virgin, in the publick offices of their church, in which all are ſuppoſed to join, as much as in the prayers which are put up to GOD by the prieſt? 'Tis true indeed, the people underſtand neither; but they are preſent at both, and join in both alike; that is, as much as men can be ſaid to join in that which they do not underſtand; as that church ſuppoſeth people may do, and receive great edification alſo, by joining with the prieſt, in a ſervice which they do not underſtand. But how they can be edified by what they do not underſtand, I muſt confeſs myſelf as little able to underſtand, as they do their prayers. But whether they underſtand them, or not, 'tis certain that if the people have any part in the publick prayers of the church, they are bound to pray to angels and ſaints.

And if the creed of pope Pius IV. framed by virtue of an order of the council of Trent, be of any authority with them; one of the articles of it is, that I do firmly hold, that the ſaints, which reign together with CHRIST, are to be worſhipped and invocated, and that they do offer up prayers to GOD for us. And this creed all the governors of cathedrals and ſuperior churches, and all who hold any dignity, or benefice with cure of ſouls from them, are bound ſolemnly to make profeſſion of, and ſwear

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to, and carefully to cauſe it to be held and taught, and preached by all that are under their charge; ſo that they are to teach the people, that the ſaints which reign together with CHRIST, are to be worſhipped and prayed to. And therefore unleſs people are not bound to do that, which they are to be taught it is their duty to do, they are by virtue of this article, required to worſhip and pray to ſaints. And if the publick office of their church be the publick worſhip; and pope Pius his creed, the publick faith of the Romiſh church, no man can be either of the faith, or in the communion of that church, who does not only hold it lawful, but his duty, to worſhip the ſaints in heaven, and to pray to them, and accordingly does join in the worſhip of them, and prayers to them, as much as in any other part of divine ſervice. SERM. LXXIII.

2. Another pretence for this doctrine and practice, is, that the ſaints in heaven do pray for us; and what is this but to be mediators and interceſſors with GOD for us? And if ſo, why may we not pray to them, to intercede with GOD for us? To this I anſwer four things.

(1.) We do not deny that the ſaints in heaven pray for us that are here upon earth, becauſe they may do ſo for any thing we know; but that they do ſo, is more than can be proved, either by clear teſtimony of ſcripture, or by any convincing argument from reaſon, and therefore no doctrine or practice can be ſafely grounded upon it.

(2.) Though it were certain, that the ſaints in heaven do pray for us; yet they are not mediators and interceſſors properly ſo called: for all interceſſion ſtrictly and properly ſo called, is in virtue of a ſacrifice offered by him that intercedes; and therefore he only

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only by whom expiation of ſin is made upon earth, can be properly an interceſſor with GOD in heaven; but this, no angel or ſaint hath done, nor can do.

And (as I have ſhewed in ſome of the former diſcourſes) it is the plain ſcope of a great part of the epiſtle to the Hebrews to prove this very thing, that under the goſpel "we have an high prieſt that lives "for ever, and appears in the preſence of GOD for "us," in the virtue of "that blood which he ſhed, "and that ſacrifice which he offered upon the croſs "for the expiation of ſin:" and that "by this high "prieſt only we have acceſs with freedom and con-"fidence to the throne of grace," and by him do offer up all our prayers and thankſgivings, and all other acts of religious worſhip to GOD: and this the apoſtle ſhews was typified in an imperfect manner, by the Jewiſh high prieſt under the law, who was but one, and none but "he only could enter into the holy "of holies, with the blood of the ſacrifices, that "were ſlain and burnt without, by which blood he "made an atonement, and interceded for the peo-"ple;" and though every prieſt might pray for the people, and the people for one another, which is a kind of interceſſion; yet that peculiar kind of interceſſion, which was performed by the high prieſt, in the holy of holies, in virtue of the ſacrifice that was ſlain without, could not be made, but by the high prieſt only. By all which was typified our high prieſt under the goſpel "who only hath made expiation of "ſin, by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and is entered into "heaven, to appear in the preſence of GOD for us, "where he lives for ever, to make interceſſion for "us," in virtue of that blood which was ſhed for the expiation of ſin, and which can only be preſented to GOD, by him that ſhed it. And this is properly inter-

interceſſion, like that of the high prieſt under the law for the people of Iſrael; and this kind of interceſſion can be made by none in heaven for us, but only by "the high prieſt of our profeſſion, JESUS "the Son of GOD," and by none elſe can we offer up our prayers and ſervices to GOD, and conſequently we cannot addreſs ourſelves to any other, angels or ſaints, as mediators with GOD for us.

(3.) Suppoſing it certain, that the ſaints do pray for us; yet we may not addreſs ſolemn prayer to them to pray for us, becauſe prayer and ſolemn invocation is a part of that religious worſhip which is peculiar to GOD.

(4.) Suppoſing it not only certain that the ſaints in heaven do pray for us, but likewiſe that they might be proper mediators and interceſſors with GOD for us; yet we ought not to pray to them, becauſe they cannot hear us, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew fully by and by.

3. Another of their pretences or excuſes for this practice, is, that praying to ſaints to pray for us, is no more than what we do to good men upon earth, when we deſire them to pray for us. So the late expounder of the catholick faith, namely the biſhop of Meaux, tells us, that they pray to the ſaints in heaven, in the ſame order of brotherly ſociety, with which we entreat our brethren upon earth to pray for us.

But that this is not a true repreſentation either of their doctrine or practice in this matter, will appear by theſe following conſiderations.

(1.) That they pray to the angels and ſaints in heaven, with the ſame ſolemn circumſtances of religious worſhip, that they pray to GOD himſelf in the ſame place and in the ſame humble poſture, and in

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the ſame religious offices and ſervices, in which they pray to GOD; which ſurely is never done by any to their brethren upon earth.

(2.) That in their prayers and thankſgivings, they join the angels and the bleſſed virgin and the ſaints together with GOD and CHRIST, as if (to uſe their own phraſe) it were in the ſame order of brotherly ſociety, and as if they were all equally the objects of our invocation and praiſe; of which in my laſt diſcourſe, I gave ſeveral plain inſtances; but this alſo is never done to our brethren upon earth.

(3.) That in the creed of pope Pius IV. it is expreſly ſaid, that the ſaints which reign together with CHRIST, are to be worſhipped and invocated; but this ſurely they will not allow to be done to our brethren upon earth. And the council of Trent does expreſly ground the worſhip and invocation of ſaints, upon their reigning with CHRIST in heaven; and therefore this worſhip and invocation of ſaints muſt neceſſarily be ſomething more, than according to the ſame order of brotherly ſociety, with which we entreat our brethren upon earth to pray for us: otherwiſe the reaſon given by the council of their reigning with CHRIST in heaven, would be frivolous; if the ſame thing may be done to our brethren upon earth.

(4.) In the publick offices of their church, they do not only pray to the ſaints to pray for them, but they direct their prayers and thankſgivings immediately to them, for all thoſe bleſſings and benefits which they aſk of GOD, and thank him for. Of which innumerable examples might be given out of their publick offices; particularly in the office of the bleſſed virgin, they pray to the angels thus; deliver us we beſeech you by your command from all our ſins.

And

And the words of the decree of the council of Trent, [*ad eorum orationes, opem, auxiliumque confugere,* to flee to their prayers, aid, and help] unleſs we will make them a meer tautology, muſt of neceſſity ſignify ſomething more than begging of them to pray for us. And indeed thoſe words of their aid and help, ſeem to be added on purpoſe to give countenance to thoſe direct prayers which are made to the ſaints, for all ſpiritual and temporal bleſſings, and which ſtill remain without any change in their publick offices; and unleſs we will underſtand them contrary to the plain and obvious ſenſe of thoſe prayers, they muſt ſignify ſomething more than praying to the ſaints to pray for us. SERM. LXXIII.

It is true indeed, that the catechiſm which was framed by order of the council of Trent, for the explaining of their doctrines, makes the difference between their prayers to GOD, and to the ſaints, to lye in this, that we ſay to GOD, have mercy on us, or hear our prayers; but to the ſaints, pray for us. But I have ſhewn before, that this is not the conſtant form of praying to ſaints, but that frequently they make direct addreſſes to them for their help and aid. And this the compilers of the catechiſm were ſenſible of, and therefore they add, although it be lawful in another manner to aſk of the ſaints themſelves, that they would have mercy on us; becauſe they are very merciful. And is not GOD ſo too? And then where is the difference between their prayers to GOD, and to the ſaints? If it neither lye in the matter of them, nor in the form, nor in the reaſon of them; if we pray to them for the ſame thing, and in the ſame form, have mercy on us, and our prayers to them be grounded upon the ſame reaſon, that our prayers to GOD are, namely, becauſe

SERM. LXXIII. because they are merciful; where then is the difference between them?

4. I will mention but one pretence more, which is, that by praying to the ſaints in heaven, they do not make them gods; and therefore there can be no ſuſpicion or danger of idolatry in the caſe.

To this I ſhall anſwer two things;

(1.) That praying to them in all places, and at all times, and for all ſorts of bleſſings, does ſuppoſe them to have the incommunicable perfections of the divine nature imparted to them, or inherent in them, namely his omnipotence, and omniſcience, and immenſe preſence; and to whatever being we aſcribe theſe perfections, in ſo doing we make it GOD; for prayer to GOD is no otherwiſe an acknowledgment of his omnipotence, omniſcience, and immenſe preſence, than as we do in all places, and at all times, pray to him for all things; and ſo they do to the ſaints, and that not only with vocal but with mental prayer, which the council of Trent allows, and in ſo doing, neceſſarily ſuppoſeth them to know our hearts, directly contrary to the reaſon which Solomon gives, why we ſhould put up all our prayers and ſupplications to GOD, (1 Kings viii. 39.) "for thou, even thou, "only knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men."

(2.) Bellarmine is ſo ſenſible of the dint of this argument, that he is forced to acknowledge the ſaints which reign with CHRIST in heaven to be gods by participation, (that is, a ſort of inferior gods, as the heathen ſuppoſed their mediators to be) and that therefore we may fly to their aid and help, as well as to their interceſſion and prayers. And is this alſo to pray to the ſaints in heaven, in the ſame order of brotherly ſociety, with which we entreat our brethren upon earth to pray for us? This me-

thinks

thinks is great familiarity, to treat gods by partici- SERM.
pation, juſt in the ſame manner as we do our brethren LXXIII.
upon earth. Certainly either Bellarmine hath raiſed the ſaints in heaven too high, when he makes them gods by participation; or the biſhop of Meaux hath ſunk them too low, when he thinks they are to be treated and addreſſed to, in the ſame rank of brotherly ſociety, with mortal men here upon earth.

One cannot but think the decree of the council of Trent to be very obſcure and ambiguous, when it can admit of two of ſo very different explications. If the infallible judge of controverſies can ſpeak no plainer; I think we had even beſt ſtick to the bible, and hear what God ſays in his word, and endeavour to underſtand it as well as we can.

I proceed now to the fourth thing which I propoſed, namely, to ſhew that this practice of theirs, of addreſſing ourſelves to angels and ſaints, and making uſe of their mediation, to offer up our prayers and thankſgivings to God is not only needleſs, being no where commanded by God; but uſeleſs alſo, and unprofitable.

They are ſo far from pretending, that it is commanded by God, that ſeveral of their later writers would fain make us believe that it is not enjoined by their councils; but only declared to be lawful, or at moſt, but recommended as profitable. Nor is there any example of praying to ſaints, either in the old or new teſtament: not in the old, (as they of the church of Rome confeſs) becauſe the ſaints were not then admitted into heaven; nor in the new, for fear of ſcandalizing the Jews, and of making the Gentiles think they propoſed new gods, and new mediators to them inſtead of the old; which are the reaſons given by their own writers.

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And it is needleſs likewiſe; becauſe the mediation of JESUS CHRIST alone is ſufficient for us, and more than the interceſſion of millions of ſaints and angels. "He" alone "is able to ſave to the utmoſt all thoſe "that come to GOD by him," as the apoſtle to the Hebrews ſpeaks. Hath not he made a clear and full promiſe to us, that "whatever we aſk in his name, "ſhall be granted us?" And have we any reaſon to doubt, either of his inclination and good will, or of his power and intereſt to do us good? What need then is there to ſue for the favour, or to take in the aſſiſtance of any other, even of thoſe who are thought to be moſt powerful, and the chief miniſters and favourites in that heavenly court? After ſuch an aſſurance that my buſineſs will be effectually done there, by that great advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous; why ſhould I apply myſelf to St. Peter, though he be ſaid to keep the keys of heaven; or to Michael the arch-angel, though he be the chief of the miniſtring ſpirits; or to the bleſſed virgin herſelf, notwithſtanding thoſe glorious titles of the queen of heaven, and the mother of mercy, which they of the church of Rome are pleaſed to beſtow upon her, without her conſent, and, as may reaſonably be preſumed, againſt her will?

I will put a caſe, which may help to render this matter a little more plain and ſenſible to us, ſo as every man may be able to judge of it. Suppoſe a king ſhould conſtitute his ſon, the great maſter of requeſts; with this expreſs declaration and aſſurance, that all petitions that were addreſſed to him by his ſon, ſhould be graciouſly received and anſwered; in this caſe, though every man might uſe his own diſcretion, at his own peril, and take what courſe he pleaſed, yet I ſhould moſt certainly prefer all my petitions

titions to the king, in the way which he had ſo plain- SERM. LXXIII.
ly directed, and ſhould trouble never a courtier of them all with my buſineſs; for fear the king ſhould think, that I did either diſtruſt his royal word, or deſpiſe his ſon, by my ſoliciting the aid and help of every little courtier, after I had put my petition into the hands of this great maſter of requeſts.

And now I will not diſtruſt any of your underſtandings ſo far as to make the application. I will only add, that it is an eternal rule of truth, and which never fails in any caſe, *fruſtra fit per plura, quod fieri poteſt per pauciora*, "it is in vain to attempt that by "more ways and means, which may as well and as "effectually be done by one;" becauſe this would be perfect loſs of time and pains: and therefore they who would ſend us ſo far about, as to trouble all the ſaints and angels in heaven with our petitions, when they cannot deny but that our great mediator is alone ſufficient; do ſeem to me to ſend us upon a very ſleeveleſs errand; ſo that if with all their ſkill in fencing, they could defend this practice from being unlawful, yet this one thing is a ſufficient objection in reaſon againſt it, that it is perfectly needleſs.

Or if we could imagine any need of this; all addreſſes to them muſt be vain and unprofitable, if they do not know our wants, and hear our prayers that are put up to them; which St. Auguſtin thought they do not know and hear, *fatendum eſt* (ſaith he *lib. De curâ pro mortuis*) *neſcire quidem mortuos, quid hic agatur*; "it muſt be acknowledged that the dead are igno-"rant of what is done here." This was his opinion; but we are certain that they cannot know our wants, nor hear our prayers at all times and in all places; unleſs they can either be preſent every where, which no finite being can be; or elſe GOD be pleaſed

SERM. LXXIII. in ſome ſupernatural way to communicate to them the knowledge of our wants, and of the prayers which we put up to them; which we can never know that he does, unleſs he hath communicated to us, that he is pleaſed to do ſo, of which the ſcripture no where gives us the leaſt intimation.

But becauſe they pretend, that the ſcripture gives us ſome hints of this, I ſhall briefly examine what they ſay about this matter.

I. That the angels know our condition here below, becauſe they are ſaid "to rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner;" and therefore the ſaints do likewiſe know our condition, becauſe "they ſhall be like the angels." But this is not ſaid of them till after the reſurrection, when we ſhall have no occaſion to pray to them. Beſides, that it may well enough be ſuppoſed, that GOD may reveal both to the angels and ſaints in heaven, the converſion of a ſinner, becauſe it may contribute to the increaſe of their joy and happineſs: but will it hence follow, that GOD reveals to them all other circumſtances of our condition, our dangers and temptations and troubles, our ſins and our ſufferings, the knowledge whereof would no ways contribute to the increaſe of their happineſs? And yet in order to their interceſſion with GOD for us, their knowledge of theſe things would be moſt beneficial to us.

II. Becauſe the rich man was concerned in hell for the ſalvation of his relations on earth, they argue that it is much more probable, that the ſaints in heaven are concerned for us, and are ready to pray for us, and therefore it is very credible, that ſome way or other, they have the knowledge of our condition and wants, though we cannot certainly tell, what that particular way is.

To

To which I anſwer,

(1.) That it is a known rule amongſt all divines, that no certain argument can be drawn from the circumſtances of a parable, but only from the main ſcope and intention of it; nor is it ſo likely that the wicked in hell ſhould have any ſhare in that, which St. Paul tells us, is the great virtue of the ſaints in heaven, I mean charity; and if they have it not, then no argument can be drawn from it. Some of their commentators think, that this motion of the rich man to Abraham, concerning his brethren, did not proceed from charity to them, but to himſelf; leſt his torment and puniſhment ſhould be increaſed by their coming to hell, by the means of the ill example which he had given them, when he was upon earth: and cardinal Cajetan thinks that he was concerned for his brethren out of pride and ambition, and becauſe it would be for the honour of his family, to have ſome of them in that glory (ſo far above any thing in this world) which he ſaw Abraham and Lazarus poſſeſs'd of. This is a reaſon, which I confeſs I ſhould not have thought on; and yet perhaps it might be likely enough to enter into the mind of a cardinal. And I cannot but obſerve by the way, that this petition or requeſt, which the rich man in hell made to Abraham, is the only inſtance we meet with in ſcripture, of any thing like a prayer that was put up to any of the ſaints in heaven.

Well! but ſuppoſe that the rich man in hell had this charity for his brethren, and we will eaſily agree, that the ſaints in heaven have much more charity, not only for their kindred, but for all men here upon earth; let us now conſider the particular way and manner which the great divines of the church of Rome (I mean the ſchool-men, who cannot be

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content to be ignorant of any thing) do aſſign of the knowledge which the ſaints in heaven have of the condition and wants of men here below.

They tell us that they know all our prayers and wants in the glaſs of the Deity, or Trinity; which metaphor of the glaſs of the Deity, or Trinity, if it have any meaning, it muſt be this, that the ſaints in heaven beholding the face of GOD or the divine eſſence, in which the knowledge of all things is contained, they may in that glaſs ſee all things that GOD knows: but then they ſpoil all this fine ſpeculation again, by telling us, that this glaſs does not neceſſarily repreſent to them all that knowledge which is in the divine mind; but that it is a kind of voluntary glaſs, in which the ſaints are only permitted to ſee ſo much as GOD pleaſeth; but how much that is, they cannot tell us. Which amounts to no more than this; that the ſaints in heaven know as much of our condition here upon earth, as GOD is pleaſed to reveal to them: and if this be all, it is as good a reaſon why we ſhould pray to good men in the Eaſt or Weſt-Indies, to pray for us and help us, becauſe they alſo know as much of our neceſſities and prayers, as GOD thinks fit to reveal to them.

But if the ſaints muſt have a revelation from GOD of our prayers, before that they know that we pray to them; then the ſhorteſt and ſureſt way to both, is to pray to GOD, and not to them; or however (as Bellarmine confeſſeth) it were very fit to pray to GOD, before every prayer we make to the ſaints, that he would be pleaſed to reveal that prayer to them, that upon this ſignal and notice given them by GOD, they may betake themſelves to pray to GOD for us. But unleſs it were very clear from ſcripture, that GOD had appointed this method, it is in reaſon

ſuch

ſuch a way about, as no man would take that could help it: and it ſeems to me to as little purpoſe: for why ſhould not a man think God as ready to grant him all his other requeſts, without the mediation and interceſſion of ſaints, as this one requeſt of revealing our prayers and wants to them? And if this way be not thought ſo convenient, I know but one more, and that is, to pray to the ſaints to go to God, and beg of him, that he would be pleaſed to reveal to them our ſupplications and wants, that they may know what to pray to him for in our behalf; which is juſt ſuch a wiſe courſe, as if a man ſhould write a letter to his friend that cannot read, and in a poſtſcript deſire him, that as ſoon as he hath received it, he would carry it to one that can read, and entreat him to read it to him. So that which way ſoever we put the caſe, what courſe ſoever we take in this matter, it will be ſo far from ſeeming reaſonable, that we ſhall have much ado, and muſt handle the buſineſs very tenderly, to hinder it from appearing very ridiculous. SERM. LXXIII.

Thus I have examined their chief pretences from ſcripture, for the countenancing this doctrine and practice, and have ſhewn how little, or rather nothing at all is there to be found for it; and that alone is reaſon enough againſt it, though there were nothing in ſcripture againſt it, that there is nothing in ſcripture for it: but I have already produced clear proof out of the new teſtament againſt it. And becauſe they think the leaſt ſhew and probability from ſcripture, a good argument on their ſide, I will offer them a probable argument out of the old teſtament, upon which, though I will lay no abſolute ſtreſs, yet I believe it would puzzle them, upon their principles, to give a clear anſwer to it; and it is from 2 Kings

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ii. 9. where Elijah juſt before he was taken up into heaven, ſays to Eliſha, "Aſk what I ſhall do for "thee before I be taken away from thee;" thereby intimating (as one would think) that then was the laſt opportunity of aſking any thing of him: but if Elijah had underſtood the matter right (as the church of Rome does now) he ſhould rather have directed him, to have prayed to him when he was in heaven, where he would have a more powerful intereſt, and be in a better capacity to do him a kindneſs. For the reaſon the church of Rome gives, why they did not pray to the ſaints under the old teſtament (namely, becauſe they were not then admitted into heaven) will not hold in the caſe of Elijah, who was taken up into heaven body and ſoul, and conſequently in as good circumſtances to be prayed to, as any of the ſaints and martys that have gone to heaven ſince.

I ſhould now have proceeded, in the fifth and laſt place, to have ſhewn, that this practice is not only needleſs and uſeleſs, but very dangerous and impious; becauſe contrary to the chriſtian religion, and greatly derogating from the merit and virtue of CHRIST's ſacrifice, and from the honour of "the "only mediator between GOD and men, CHRIST "JESUS." And indeed, how can we apply ourſelves to any other mediators and interceſſors with GOD in heaven for us, without a groſs and apparent contempt of the high prieſt of our profeſſion, JESUS the Son of GOD? As if we either diſtruſted his kindneſs and affection, or his power and intereſt in heaven, to obtain at GOD's hand all thoſe bleſſings which we ſtand in need of. The apoſtle to the Hebrews tells us expreſly, that "he is able to ſave to "the utmoſt all thoſe that come to GOD by him;" that is, who addreſs their prayers and ſupplications

to GOD in his name and mediation. But if we will chuſe other mediators for ourſelves, of whom we are not ſure that they can either hear or help us, we may fall ſhort of that ſalvation, which the apoſtle tells us we are ſecure of by the mediation of JESUS CHRIST; "for he is able," &c. SERM. LXXIII.

But this hath been ſhewn ſo abundantly in the former part of this diſcourſe, and is ſo clearly conſequent from the whole, that I ſhall here conclude my diſcourſe upon the ſecond propoſition I laid down from the words of my text, viz. that there is but one mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS.

As to the third propoſition contained in the text, viz. that this one mediator, JESUS CHRIST, gave himſelf a ranſom for all, I have treated on that ſubject particularly, on another * occaſion.

And as to the fourth and laſt propoſition, viz. that the mediation or interceſſion of JESUS CHRIST is founded in his redemption of mankind; and becauſe he gave himſelf a ranſom for all, therefore he and he only is qualified to intercede for all men, in virtue of that ſacrifice which he offered for the ſalvation of mankind, I judge nothing more needful to be added, to what has fallen in concerning that ſubject, in my handling the ſecond propoſition, in this and the two former ſermons.

* A Sermon concerning the ſacrifice and ſatisfaction of Chriſt. Printed in 1693.

SER-

Preached on aſcenſion day.

SERMON LXXIV.

The general and effectual publication of the goſpel by the apoſtles.

MARK XVI. 19. 20.

So then after the LORD *had ſpoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and ſat on the right hand of* GOD. *And they went forth, and preached every where, the* LORD *working with them, and confirming the word with ſigns following.*

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IN theſe words you have theſe two great points of chriſtian doctrine.

I. Our SAVIOUR's aſcenſion into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of GOD; "he was received "up into heaven, and ſat on the right hand of "GOD."

II. The effect or conſequence of his aſcenſion and exaltation, which was the general and effectual publication of the goſpel; "they went forth, and preached "every where, the LORD working with them, and "confirming the word with ſigns following." And both theſe are very proper for this day; but I ſhall at this time handle the latter point, namely, the effect or conſequence of our SAVIOUR's aſcenſion into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of GOD; "they went forth, and preached every where, the "LORD working with them, and confirming the "word with ſigns following."

And

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And theſe words contain two things in them.

I. The general publication of the goſpel, by the apoſtles; "they went forth and preached every "where."

II. The reaſon of the great efficacy and ſucceſs of it; namely, the divine and miraculous power, which accompanied the preaching of it; "the LORD "wrought with them, and confirmed the word "with ſigns following."

I. The general publication of the goſpel by the apoſtles; "they went forth, and preached every "where." And indeed the induſtry of the apoſtles, and the other diſciples, in publiſhing the goſpel, was almoſt incredible. What pains did they take? what hazards did they run? what difficulties and diſcouragements did they contend withal in this work? and yet their ſucceſs was greater than their induſtry, and beyond all human expectation: as will appear, if we conſider theſe five things.

1. The vaſt ſpreading of the goſpel in ſo ſhort a ſpace.

2. The wonderful power and efficacy of it, upon the lives and manners of men.

3. The weakneſs and meanneſs of the inſtruments that were employed in this great work.

4. The powerful oppoſition that was raiſed againſt it.

5. The great diſcouragements to the embracing the profeſſion of it. I ſhall ſpeak briefly to each of theſe.

1. The vaſt ſpreading of the goſpel in ſo ſhort a ſpace. This is repreſented, Rev. xiv. 6. by "an "angel flying through the midſt of heaven, and "preaching the everlaſting goſpel to every nation, "and kindred, and tongue, and people." No ſooner was

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was the doctrine of the chriſtian religion publiſhed, and made known to the world, but it was readily embraced by great numbers, almoſt in all places where it came. And indeed ſo it was foretold, in the prophecies of the old teſtament, Gen. xlix. 10. "That when Shiloh (that is the Meſſias) ſhould "come, to him ſhould the gathering of the people "be:" and Iſa. ii. 2. "That in the laſt days the "mountain of the LORD's houſe ſhould be eſta-"bliſhed in the top of the mountains, and be ex-"alted above the hills, and that all nations ſhould "flow unto it." Iſa. lx. 8. the prophet ſpeaking of mens ready ſubmiſſion to the goſpel, and the great number of thoſe that ſhould come in upon the preaching of it, they are ſaid, "to fly as a cloud, and as "the doves to the windows."

So quick and ſtrange a progreſs did this new doctrine and religion make in the world, that in the ſpace of about 30 years after our SAVIOUR's death, it was not only diffuſed through the greateſt part of the Roman empire, but had reached as far as Parthia and India. In which we ſee our SAVIOUR's prediction fully verified, that before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the goſpel ſhould be preached in all the world, Matt. xxiv. 14. "This goſpel of the "kingdom ſhall be preached in all the world, for a "witneſs unto all nations, and then ſhall the end "come." But this is not all: men were not only brought in to the profeſſion of the goſpel; but,

2. This doctrine had likewiſe a wonderful power and efficacy upon the lives and manners of men. The generality of thoſe that entertained the goſpel, were obedient to it in word and deed, as the apoſtle tells us, concerning the Gentiles that were converted to chriſtianity, Rom. xv. 18. Upon the change of their

their religion, followed alſo the change of their manners, and of their former courſe of life. They that took upon them the profeſſion of chriſtianity, "did "thenceforth not walk as other Gentiles did, in the "luſts of the fleſh, and according to the vicious "courſe of the world; but did put off concerning "their former converſation, the old man, which was "corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts; and were "renewed in the ſpirit of their mind, and did put on "the new man, which after GOD was created in "righteouſneſs and true holineſs." So ſtrange an effect had the goſpel upon the lives of the generality of the profeſſors of it, that I remember Tertullian, in his apology to the Roman emperor and ſenate, challengeth them to inſtance in any one, that bore the title of Chriſtian, that was condemned as a thief, or a murderer, or a ſacrilegious perſon, or that was guilty of any of thoſe groſs enormities, for which ſo many pagans were every day made examples of public juſtice, and puniſhed and executed among them. SERM. LXXIV.

And this certainly was a very admirable and happy effect, which the goſpel had upon men, to work ſo great and ſudden a change in the lives of thoſe who entertained this doctrine, to take them quite off from thoſe vicious practices which they had been brought up in, and accuſtomed to; to change their ſpirits, and the temper of their minds; and of lewd and diſhoneſt, to make them ſober and juſt, and "holy in "all manner of converſation;" of proud and fierce, contentious and paſſionate, malicious and revengeful to make them humble and meek, kind and tenderhearted, peaceable and charitable.

And that the primitive Chriſtians were generally good men, and of virtuous lives, is credible, becauſe their religion did teach and oblige them to be ſuch; which

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which though it be not effectual now, to make all the profeſſors of it ſuch, as it requires they ſhould be; yet it was a very forcible argument then, in the circumſtances in which the primitive Chriſtians were: for chriſtianity was a hated and perſecuted profeſſion: no man could then have any inducement to embrace it, unleſs he were reſolved to practiſe it, and live according to the rules of it; for it offered men no rewards and advantages in this world; but on the contrary threatned men with the greateſt temporal inconveniencies and ſufferings, and it promiſed no happineſs to men in the other world upon any other terms, than of "denying ungodlineſs and wordly luſts," and of "living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in "this preſent world."

And beſides this conſideration, we have the beſt teſtimony in the world of their unblameable lives; viz. the teſtimony of their profeſſed enemies, who did not perſecute them for any perſonal crimes, which they charged particular perſons withal, but only for their religion, acknowledging them otherwiſe to be very innocent and good people. Particularly Pliny, in his letter to Trajan the emperor (who had given him in charge, to make particular enquiry concerning the Chriſtians) gives this honourable report of them, That there was no fault to be found in them, beſides their obſtinate refuſal to ſacrifice to the gods; that at their religious meetings it was an eſſential part of their worſhip to oblige themſelves by a ſolemn ſacrament, againſt murder, and theft, and adultery, and all manner of wickedneſs and vice. No chriſtian hiſtorian could have given a better character of them, than this heathen writer does. But,

3. The ſucceſs of the goſpel will appear yet more ſtrange, if we conſider the weakneſs and meanneſs of

of the inſtruments that were employed in this great work. A company of plain and illiterate men, moſt of them deſtitute of the advantages of education, went forth upon this great deſign, weak and unarmed, unaſſiſted by any worldly intereſt, having no ſecular force and power on their ſide, to give countenance and authority to them; and this not only at their firſt ſetting out, but they remained under theſe diſadvantages for three ages together. SERM. LXXIV.

The firſt publiſhers of the chriſtian religion offered violence to no man, did not go about to compel any by force to entertain the doctrine which they preached, and to liſt themſelves of their number; they were not attended with legions of armed men, to diſpoſe men for the reception of their doctrine, by plunder and free-quarter, by violence and tortures; this modern method of converſion was not then thought of; nor did they go about to tempt and allure men to their way, by the promiſes of temporal rewards, and by the hopes of riches and honours; nor did they uſe any artificial inſinuations of wit and eloquence, to gain upon the minds of men, and ſteal their doctrines into them; but delivered themſelves with the greateſt plainneſs and ſimplicity; and without any ſtudied ornaments of ſpeech, or fine arts of perſuaſion, declared plainly to them, the doctrine and miracles, the life and death, and reſurrection of JESUS CHRIST, promiſing life and immortality to them that did believe and obey his doctrine, and threatning eternal woe and miſery in another world, to the deſpiſers of it.

And yet theſe contemptible inſtruments, notwithſtanding all theſe diſadvantages, did their work effectually, and, by the power of GOD going along with them,

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them, gained numbers every day to their religion; and in a ſhort ſpace "drew the world after them."

Nor did they only win over the common people; but alſo ſeveral perſons conſiderable for their dignity, and eminent for their learning, who afterwards became zealous aſſertors of chriſtianity, and were not aſhamed to be inſtructed in the ſaving knowledge of the goſpel, by ſuch mean and unlearned perſons as the apoſtles were; for they ſaw ſomething in them more divine, and which carried with it a greater power and perſuaſion, than human learning and eloquence.

4. We will conſider the mighty oppoſition that was raiſed againſt the goſpel. At its firſt appearance it could not be otherwiſe, but that it muſt meet with a great deal of difficulty and oppoſition, from the luſts and vices of men, which it did ſo plainly and ſo ſeverely declare againſt, and likewiſe from the prejudices of men that had been brought up in a contrary religion; no prejudice being ſo ſtrong, as that which is founded in education; and of all the prejudices of education, none is ſo obſtinate and ſo hard to be removed, as thoſe about religion, yea, though they be never ſo abſurd and unreaſonable: "hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are "no gods?" Men are very hardly brought off from the religion which they have been brought up in, how little ground and reaſon ſoever there be for it; the being trained up in it, and having a reverence for it implanted in them in their tender years ſupplies all other defects.

Had men been free and indifferent in religion, when chriſtianity firſt appeared in the world, and had they not had their minds prepoſſeſſed with other apprehenſions of GOD and religion, and been inured to rites and ſuperſtitions of a quite different nature from

from the chriſtian religion; or had they at that time been weary of the ſuperſtitions of their idolatrous worſhip, and been enquiring after a better way of religion; then indeed the chriſtian religion had appeared with great advantage, and would in all probability have been entertained with a readineſs of mind proportionable to the reaſonableneſs of it. But this was not the caſe: when the doctrine of the goſpel was firſt publiſhed in the world, the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, were violently prejudiced againſt it, and fixed in their ſeveral religions. SERM. LXXIV.

The Jews indeed in former times had been very prone to relinquiſh the worſhip of the true GOD, and to fall into the heathen idolatry: but after GOD had puniſhed them ſeverely for that ſin, by a long captivity; they continued ever after, very ſtrict and firm to the worſhip of the true GOD; and never were they more tenacious of their religion and law, than at that very time when our SAVIOUR appeared in the world: and though he was foretold in their law, and moſt particularly deſcribed, in the authentic books of their religion, the prophets of the old teſtament; yet by reaſon of certain groundleſs traditions, which they had received from the interpreters of their law, that their Meſſias was to be a great temporal prince, they conceived an invincible prejudice againſt our SAVIOUR, upon account of the mean circumſtances in which he appeared; and upon this prejudice they rejected him, and put him to death, and perſecuted his followers; and though their religion was much nearer to the Chriſtian, than any of the heathen idolatries; yet upon this account, of our SAVIOUR's mean appearance, they were much more averſe to the entertainment of it, than the groſſeſt idolaters among the nations.

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Not but that their prejudice alſo was very great; the common people being ſtrongly addicted to the idolatry and ſuperſtitions of their ſeveral countries; and the wiſer, and more learned (whom they called philoſophers) were ſo puſt up, with a conceit of their own knowledge and eloquence, that they deſpiſed the rudeneſs and ſimplicity of the apoſtles, and looked upon their doctrine of a crucified SAVIOUR, as ridiculous, and the ſtory of his reſurrection from the dead as abſurd and impoſſible. So St. Paul tells us, "that the croſs of CHRIST was to the Jews a "ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs."

But beſides the oppoſition which the goſpel met withal, from the luſts and prejudices of men, the powers of the world did likewiſe ſtrongly combine againſt it. Among the Jews, the chief prieſts and rulers did, with all their force and malice, endeavour to ſtifle it in the birth, and to ſuppreſs it in its firſt riſe; and ſeveral of the Roman emperors, who were then the great governors of the world, engaged all their authority, and their whole ſtrength, for the extirpation of it, and raiſed ſuch a ſtorm of perſecution againſt it, as ſwept away greater numbers of mankind, than any famine or plague or war that ever was in the Roman empire: and yet this religion bore up againſt all this oppoſition, and made its way through all the reſiſtance, that the luſts and prejudices of men, armed with the power and authority of the whole world, could make againſt it. And this brings me to the

5. And laſt conſideration I mentioned, the great diſcouragement that was given to the entrance of this religion.

There was nothing left to invite and engage men to it, but the conſideration of another world; for

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all the evils of this world threatned every one that took the profession of christianity upon him. Whoever was known to be a Christian was liable to reproach and ruin, to cruel mockings and scourgings, to banishment, or imprisonment and confiscation of estate; but these were slight and tolerable evils, in comparison of others that were commonly inflicted upon them; they were condemned to the mines, and to the lions, and all imaginable cruelties were exercised upon them; the most exquisite torments that could be devised, and death in all its fearful shapes was presented to them, to deter men from embracing this religion, and to tempt them to quit it: and yet they persisted in the profession of their religion, and for the sake of it, did not only "take "joyfully the spoiling of their goods," but the most barbarous usage of their persons, and demeaned themselves not only with patience and courage, but with exultation and triumph, under those tortures which no man can hear or read of, without horror: and they did not only bear up thus manfully, for one brunt; but when these violent persecutions were renewed and repeated upon them, christianity supported itself under all these daunting discouragements for almost three hundred years, and held out, till the very malice of their persecutors was out of breath, and their cruelty had tired itself. SERM. LXXIV.

Nay it did not only support itself, under all these oppositions, but grew and prospered, and the blood of martyrs became the seed of the church, and Christians sprang up faster, than any persecution could mow them down: for men by degrees became curious to enquire into the cause of such sufferings, and the reason of so much constancy and patience under them; and upon enquiry were satisfied, and became

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Chriſtians themſelves; and many times their very perſecutors were ready to ſacrifice their lives the next day, for that very cauſe for which but the day before they had put others to death.

And it cannot here be reaſonably objected, that Chriſtians yielded up themſelves to all theſe ſufferings, upon the ſame account that ſome brave ſpirits among the heathen laid down their lives for their country; namely, out of a deſire of fame, and to perpetuate their names in after-ages; this, I ſay, cannot reaſonably be ſaid in this caſe; becauſe theſe ſufferers were not the great and ambitious ſpirits, the flower and ſelect part of mankind, but the common people, and many of them of the tenderer ſex and age, who have uſually a greater ſenſe of pain than of glory; and yet ſo were they animated by their religion, and tranſported beyond themſelves, as not only to ſubmit, but many times to offer themſelves to thoſe ſufferings, by declaring themſelves to be Chriſtians, when no man accuſed them, and when they knew they ſhould die, for making that profeſſion; ſo that it is harder to juſtify their forwardneſs to ſuffer, than the ſincerity of their ſufferings. Beſides, that nothing could be more fooliſh, and unreaſonable, than for men to hope to get a name by ſuffering in a croud, and to be particularly remembred to poſterity, when they died in ſuch multitudes, that no man knew the names of the greateſt part of the ſufferers.

You ſee then how ſtrongly the goſpel prevailed, how ſoon this new religion over-ran the world, how ſuddenly it ſubdued the ſpirits, and changed the manners of men; and by what mean and deſpicable inſtruments, to all human appearance, this great work was done; and how in deſpite of all oppoſi-

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tion and diſcouragements, it was carried on. Can any one of the falſe religions of the world pretend to have been propagated and eſtabliſhed in ſuch a manner, merely by their own force, and the evidence and power of truth upon the minds of men; and to have borne up and ſuſtained themſelves ſo long under ſuch fierce aſſaults, as chriſtianity hath done? SERM. LXXIV.

As for the religion of Mahomet, it is famouſly known to have been planted by force at firſt, and to have been maintained in the world, by the ſame violent means. So that great impoſtor openly declares, that he came not to plant his religion by miracles, but by the ſword.

And as for the idolatries of the heathen, they came in upon the world by inſenſible degrees, and did not oppoſe the corruptions of men, but grew out of them; and being ſuited to the vicious temper and diſpoſition of mankind, they eaſily gained upon their ignorance and ſuperſtition, by cuſtom and example. They were juſt ſuch a corruption of natural religion, in ſuch times of darkneſs and ignorance, and by ſuch inſenſible ſteps, as there hath been ſince, of the chriſtian religion in ſome parts of the world, which we all know. But no ſooner did the light of the goſpel ſhine out upon the world, but the idolatry and ſuperſtition of the heathen fell before it, like "Dagon "before the ark of GOD;" and though it had the power of the world, and countenance of authority on its ſide, yet it was not able to maintain its ground; and no ſooner was that prop taken away, which was the only ſupport of it, but it preſently ſunk and vaniſhed; it was not driven out of the world by violence and perſecution, but upon the breaking in of ſo great a light, it ſilently withdrew, as being aſhamed of itſelf; and when afterwards the emperor Julian

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endeavoured to retrieve it, by his wit and authority, and uſed all imaginable arts and ſtratagems, to ſuppreſs and extinguiſh chriſtianity, he was able to effect neither; for the chriſtian religion kept its ground, and paganiſm, after it had made a little blaze, died with him.

Now to what cauſe ſhall we aſcribe this wonderful ſucceſs, and prevalency of the goſpel in the world? There can but theſe two be imagined; the excellency of the chriſtian religion, and the power and preſence of the divine Spirit accompanying it.

1. The excellency of the chriſtian religion, which both in reſpect of the goodneſs of its precepts, and the aſſurance of its rewards, hath plainly the advantage of any religion, that ever yet appeared in the world. And this is a great advantage indeed: but by this alone it could never have been able to have broken through all that mighty oppoſition and reſiſtance, which was made againſt it; and therefore that it might be able to encounter this with ſucceſs,

2. GOD was pleaſed to accompany the firſt preaching of it, with a mighty and ſenſible preſence and power of his ſpirit. And this brings me to the

Second part of the text, the reaſon of the wonderful efficacy and ſucceſs, which the apoſtles had, in the preaching of the goſpel; "the LORD wrought with "them, and confirmed the word with ſigns follow-"ing." Which words expreſs to us that miraculous power of the Holy Ghoſt, which accompanied the firſt preaching of the goſpel; by which I do not intend to exclude the inward operation of GOD's holy Spirit upon the minds of men, ſecretly moving and inclining thoſe to whom the goſpel was preached, to embrace and entertain it; which the ſcripture elſewhere ſpeaks frequently of, and may poſſibly be intended

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intended in the firſt of theſe expreſſions, "the LORD "working with them;" and the latter may only be meant of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, with regard to which, GOD is ſaid to "confirm the word "with ſigns following," or accompanying it. But I rather think they are both intended to expreſs the ſame thing, and that the latter is only added by way of explication of the former, to ſhew more particularly, how the LORD wrought with them; namely, by giving confirmation to their doctrine by thoſe miraculous gifts and powers of the Spirit, which they were endowed withal; "the LORD working with "them, and confirming the word with ſigns follow-"ing;" that is, with thoſe miracles, which accompanied the firſt preaching of the goſpel. For theſe words do plainly refer to the promiſe of the Spirit at the 17th verſe; "and theſe ſigns ſhall follow them "that believe;" which is the reaſon why they are here called ſigns following; that is, miracles which accompanied the word that was preached.

And that this is the full meaning of this text, will appear by comparing it with one or two more, Rom. xv. 18, 19. where St. Paul ſpeaking of "the things "which CHRIST had wrought by him, to make the "Gentiles obedient to the goſpel, he ſays, they were "done through mighty ſigns and wonders, by the "power of the Spirit of GOD;" which is the ſame with that which is ſaid here in the text, of "the "LORD's working with the apoſtles, and confirming "the word with ſigns following." So likewiſe, Heb. ii. 3, 4. the apoſtle there tells us, that "the "goſpel which was firſt ſpoken by the LORD, was "confirmed by them that heard him, GOD alſo bear-"ing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, "and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy

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" Ghoſt." So that the great confirmation, which is ſaid here to be given to the goſpel, was by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which were poured forth upon the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians.

In ſpeaking of which, I ſhall briefly do theſe two things.

I. Give an account of the nature of theſe gifts, and of the uſe and end to which they ſerved: and then ſhew in the

II. Place, how the goſpel was confirmed by them.

I. For the nature of theſe gifts, and the uſe and end to which they were deſigned.

They are thoſe miraculous powers which by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon the day of Pentecoſt, the apoſtles were endowed withal, to qualify them to publiſh the goſpel with more ſpeed and ſucceſs. Such was the gift of ſpeaking divers languages, and the gift of interpreting things ſpoken in divers languages; (and theſe two gifts were not neceſſarily united in the ſame perſon, for the apoſtle tells us, that ſome had the one, and ſome the other;) the gift of prophecy and foretelling things to come, which was always a ſign of a perſon divinely inſpired; the miraculous powers of healing diſeaſes, of raiſing the dead, and of caſting out devils; a power of inflicting corporal diſeaſes, and puniſhments, upon ſcandalous and obſtinate Chriſtians, who would not ſubmit to the apoſtles authority and government; which is in ſcripture called; " a delivering up to Satan, for " the deſtruction," or tormenting " of the body, " that the ſoul may be ſaved;" nay, in ſome caſes, this power extended to the inflicting of death itſelf, as in the caſe of Ananias and Sapphira.

Not that all theſe miraculous powers were given to every one of the apoſtles, or that they could exer-

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ciſe them at all times; ſome were beſtowed upon one, and ſome upon another, according to GOD's good pleaſure, and as was moſt expedient for the uſe and benefit of the church, and moſt ſubſervient to thoſe ends for which GOD gave them; only we find that all the apoſtles had the gift of tongues; and that the power of "caſting out devils, in the name of "CHRIST," was common to every Chriſtian, and continued in the church for a long time after the other gifts were ceaſed; as Tertul. Arnob. and Min. Felix do teſtify, even of their own times. SERM. LXXV.

But II. I ſhall briefly ſhew how the goſpel was confirmed by theſe miraculous gifts.

Now beſides the particular uſes and ends of thoſe miraculous gifts (as the gift of tongues, did evidently ſerve for the more ſpeedy planting and propagating of the chriſtian religion in the world; and the power of inflicting corporal puniſhments, in a miraculous manner, upon ſcandalous and diſobedient Chriſtians, did maintain the power and authority of the apoſtles, and was inſtead of an ordinary magiſtratical power, which Chriſtians were deſtitute of, whilſt the Roman empire continued heathen;) I ſay, beſides the particular ends and uſes of all theſe miraculous gifts, they did all in general, as they were miracles, ſerve for the confirmation of the goſpel.

The apoſtles delivered the doctrine of CHRIST, and were witneſſes of his reſurrection from the dead, as the great miracle, whereby his doctrine was confirmed; now there was all the reaſon in the world to believe them, to whom GOD was pleaſed to give ſuch a teſtimony from heaven: for who could make any doubt of the truth of their teſtimony, concerning the reſurrection of CHRIST who were enabled to raiſe "others from the dead," and by many other wonderful

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wonderful things which they did, gave ſuch clear teſtimony, that "GOD was with them?"

Never had any religion fewer worldly advantages to recommend it, and ſo little temporal countenance and aſſiſtance to carry it on; but what it wanted from men, it had from GOD; for "he gave witneſs to it with ſigns "and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the "holy Ghoſt." GOD ſeems on purpoſe to have ſtript it of all ſecular advantages, that the chriſtian religion might be perfectly free from all ſuſpicion of worldly intereſt and deſign, and that it might not owe its eſtabliſhment in the world, to the wiſdom and contrivance of men, but to the arm and power of GOD.

The inferences I ſhall at preſent make from this diſcourſe ſhall be theſe.

I. To give us ſatisfaction of the truth and divinity of the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, which hath had ſo eminent a confirmation given to it from heaven, and did at its firſt ſetting out ſo ſtrangely prevail in the world, againſt all human probability; "not by might, nor by power; but by the Spirit "of the LORD."

No man can well ſuppoſe a religion in circumſtances of greater diſadvantage, and upon all human accounts, more unlikely to ſuſtain and bear up itſelf, than the chriſtian religion was. The firſt appearance of it was ſo mean, and its beginnings ſo ſmall, that no man but would have thought it would preſently have come to nothing; and no other account can be given of the ſtrange ſucceſs and prevalency of it, but that "it was of GOD," and therefore "it could "not be overthrown."

II. This diſcourſe may likewiſe ſatisfy us of the reaſon why this miraculous power, which accompanied the goſpel at firſt, is now ceaſed; becauſe there

there is not the like reason and necessity for it, which there was at first. SERM. LXXIV.

It was highly necessary then, to introduce the christian religion into the world, and to be a sensible evidence to men of the divinity of that new doctrine, which was preached to them, but now that the gospel is generally entertained, there is not the same reason, why this miraculous power should still be continued. *Acquisito fine, cessant media ad finem*, when the end is once obtained, the means cease; and the wise GOD, who is never wanting in what is necessary, does not use to be lavish in that which is superfluous. Now that the christian religion hath got firm footing in the world; GOD leaves it to be propagated and advanced by its own rational force upon the minds of men: now that the prejudices of education in a contrary religion are removed, and the powers of the world are reconciled to christianity; there is no need of such violent and extraordinary means for the continuance of it: now that it stands upon equal advantages with other religions: GOD hath left it to be carried on, in more human and ordinary ways, and such as are more level and accommodate to the nature of man.

That miracles are long since ceased, is acknowledged by the fathers, who lived an age or two after the ceasing of them; particularly by St. Chrysostom, who gives the same reason for it, which I have just now assigned. But the church of Rome would still bear us in hand, that this miraculous power does still continue in their church, and according to Bellarmine, must always continue; because he makes it an inseparable property and mark of the true church.

But we pretend to no such power, nor have we any reason so to do; because all the doctrines of our religion,

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religion, are the ancient doctrines of chriſtianity, delivered by our SAVIOUR, and by his apoſtles publiſhed to the world; and theſe are ſufficiently confirmed already, by the miracles which our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles wrought in the primitive times of chriſtianity. But the church of Rome hath great occaſion and need of new miracles, to confirm their new doctrines; and therefore as they have reaſon, they uſually apply them to the confirmation of their new doctrines; ſome to confirm purgatory, and to give countenance to indulgences; others to encourage the worſhip of the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints; others to confirm that which all the miracles in the world are not ſufficient to confirm, I mean the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; which, becauſe it overthrows the certainty of ſenſe, is in the nature of it peculiarly incapable of being confirmed by a miracle.

III. And laſtly, the conſideration of what has been ſaid does juſtly upbraid us that this religion, which was ſo powerful at firſt, and hath ſuch characters of divinity upon it, coming down to us confirmed by ſo many miracles, ſhould yet have ſo little effect upon moſt of us who call ourſelves Chriſtians.

We have all the advantages of the chriſtian religion, having been educated and brought up in it; and yet it hath leſs effect upon us, than it had upon thoſe whoſe minds were prejudiced, and whoſe manners were depraved, by the principles of a falſe religion: for thoſe who were reduced from paganiſm to chriſtianity, did on the ſudden become better men, and were more holy and virtuous in their lives; than the greateſt part of us, who have been inſtructed and trained up all our lives in the doctrine of chriſtianity.

The true reaſon of which is, that many of us are Chriſtians, upon the ſame account, that they were

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at firſt heathens; becauſe it was the religion of their country, and they were born and bred up in it: but chriſtianity was the religion of their choice, and there were no motives to perſuade them to the profeſſion of that religion, but what were as powerful to oblige them to the practice of it. Let us alſo be Chriſtians, not only by cuſtom, but by choice; and then we ſhall live according to our religion. SERM. LXXIV.

He that takes up a religion, for any other reaſon, than to obey and practiſe it, does not chuſe a religion, but only counterfeits the choice of it. We have beyond compariſon the beſt and moſt reaſonable religion in the world, a religion that hath the greateſt evidence of its truth, that contains the beſt precepts, and gives men the greateſt aſſurance of a future happineſs, and directs them to the ſureſt way of attaining it: now the better our religion is, the worſe are we, if we be not made good by it. The philoſophy of the heathen, made ſome virtuous: and there were many eminent ſaints under the imperfection of the jewiſh inſtitution. What degrees then of holineſs and virtue may be expected from us, upon whom the glorious light of the goſpel ſhineth ſo brightly?

I will conclude all, with the words of the apoſtle, Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "Therefore we ought to give "the more earneſt heed to the things which we have "heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip. "For if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and "every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt "recompence of reward: how ſhall we eſcape, if "we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt "began to be ſpoken by the LORD, and was con-"firmed unto us by them that heard him; GOD alſo "bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, "and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy "Ghoſt, according to his own will?" SER-

Preached on the feaſt of St. Michael.

SERMON LXXV.

The nature, office, and employment of good angels.

HEB. I. 14.

Are they not all miniſtring ſpirits ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation.

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THIS is ſpoken of good angels, whoſe exiſtence, as well as that of evil ſpirits, the ſcriptures both of the old and new teſtament, do every where take for granted, no leſs than they do the being of GOD, and the immortality of the ſoul. And well they may, ſince they are all founded upon the general conſent of all ages, derived down to us from the firſt ſpring and original of mankind; of which general conſent and tradition, it is one of the hardeſt things in the world to aſſign any good reaſon, if the things themſelves were not true. Therefore I ſhall not go about to force my way into this argument concerning the exiſtence of ſpirits, and beings diſtinct from matter, by dint of diſpute (which perhaps would neither be ſo proper, nor ſo profitable for this aſſembly) but ſhall take the thing as I find it received by a general conſent of mankind. And ſo the books of divine revelation do: nor was there reaſon to proceed in any other method, than to ſuppoſe theſe things, and take them for granted, as generally aſſented to by mankind, without either aſſerting them for new diſcoveries, or attempting to

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prove what was ſo univerſally believed. The ſcrip- SERM. tures indeed have more particularly declared the na- LXXV. ture of theſe ſpirits, as alſo their order and employment; as in the words which I have read to you, where the office and employment of good angels is more particularly diſcovered; "are they not all" (ſays the text) "miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to mi- "niſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?"

The author of this epiſtle to the Hebrews having had occaſion, in comparing the two diſpenſations of the law and the goſpel, to ſpeak of the angels, by whoſe miniſtry the law was given, did not think fit to entertain thoſe to whom he wrote, with any nice and curious ſpeculations (for ſchool divinity was not then in faſhion) about the nature and order of angels; but tells us, what it concerns us more to know, namely, what their office and employment is in regard to us. Concerning their nature, he only tells us, that they are ſpirits; as to their office and employment, he ſays in general, that they are miniſtring ſpirits, that is, that they ſtand before GOD to attend upon him, ready to receive his commands, and to execute his pleaſure: more particularly, that they are upon occaſion appointed and ſent forth by GOD to miniſter on the behalf, and to do good offices "for them that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation." Which laſt words are a deſcription of pious and good men, ſuch as had ſincerely embraced the chriſtian religion, and were thereby become the children of GOD, and heirs of eternal ſalvation. So that theſe words are a brief ſummary of the doctrine of good angels, and of what the ſcripture has thought fit to reveal to us concerning them: which may be referred to theſe three heads.

Firſt, their nature; "are they not ſpirits?

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Secondly, their general office and employment; " are they not miniſtring ſpirits?"

Thirdly, their ſpecial office and employment, in regard to good men, " they are ſent forth to mi- " niſter for them" (that is, in their behalf, and for " their benefit) " who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation."

And this is as much as is neceſſary for us to know concerning them; and all this is very agreeable to the general apprehenſion of mankind; but the ſcripture hath very much cleared and confirmed to us, that which was more obſcure and leſs certain before. I ſhall briefly explain and illuſtrate theſe three heads, and then draw ſome uſeful inferences from the whole.

Firſt, for their nature; they are ſpirits. This is univerſally agreed by all that acknowledge ſuch an order of beings, that they are ſpirits: but whether they are pure ſpirits, diveſted of matter, and all kind of corporeal vehicle (as the philoſophers term it) hath been a great controverſy, but I think of no great moment and conſequence. Not only the ancient philoſophers, but ſome of the ancient chriſtian fathers, did believe angels to be clothed with ſome kind of bodies, conſiſting of the pureſt and fineſt matter; which they call ætherial. And this opinion ſeems to be grounded upon a pious belief, that it is the peculiar excellency and prerogative of the divine nature, to be a pure and ſimple ſpirit, wholly ſeparate from matter: but the more current opinion of the chriſtian church (eſpecially of latter times) hath been, that angels are mere and pure ſpirits, without any thing that is material and corporeal belonging to them; but yet ſo, that they have power to aſſume thin and airy bodies, and can when they pleaſe appear in human ſhape, as they are frequently in ſcripture ſaid to have done. And this ſeems moſt agree-

able to the ſcripture account of them; though I think it is no neceſſary article of faith, either to believe that they are clothed with ſome kind of bodies, or that they are wholly diveſted of matter. SERM. LXXV.

But however this be, they are deſcribed in ſcripture to be endowed with great excellencies and perfections; they are ſaid "to excel in ſtrength," Pſal. ciii. 20. and in knowledge and wiſdom. Hence are thoſe expreſſions of "being as an angel of GOD, to "diſcern good and bad," 2 Sam. xiv. 17. "Wiſe, "according to the wiſdom of an angel," ver. 20. To be of great activity and ſwiftneſs in their motions; hence it is that they are repreſented in ſcripture, as "full of wings:" and to excel in purity and holineſs; hence is that title given them in ſcripture, of "the holy angels." This is the ſum of what the ſcripture hath in ſeveral places delivered to us, concerning the nature and properties of good angels; and beyond this, all our knowledge of them is mere conjecture and uncertainty; and the nice ſpeculations concerning them, idle and wanton curioſities. Indeed the ſcripture gives ſufficient intimation of ſeveral ranks and orders among them, by calling Michael an archangel, and chief prince, and by diſtinguiſhing them by the names of "prin-"cipalities, and powers, and thrones, and domi-"nions:" but what the difference of theſe names import, though ſome have attempted to explain, yet I do not find that they have diſcovered any thing to us, beſides their own ignorance and arrogance, in pretending to be "wiſe above what is "written; intruding into thoſe things which they "have not ſeen, being vainly puft up in their "fleſhly minds;" as the apoſtle cenſures ſome in his time.

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Secondly, we have here their general office and employment; "they are miniſtring ſpirits;" they are (as I may ſay) domeſtick ſervants, and conſtant attendants upon that great and glorious king, "whoſe "throne is in the heavens, and whoſe kingdom "ruleth over all; they ſtand continually before him, "to behold his face," expecting his commands, and in a conſtant readineſs to do his will. For though the omnipotence of GOD, and his perfect power of acting be ſuch, that he can do all things immediately by himſelf, "whatever he pleaſeth in "heaven and in earth;" can govern the world, and ſteer the affairs of it, and turn them which way he thinks beſt, by the leaſt nod and beck of his will, without any inſtruments or miniſters of his pleaſure; yet his wiſdom and goodneſs has thought fit to honour his creatures, eſpecially this higher and more perfect rank of beings, with his commands, and to make them, according to their ſeveral degrees and capacities, the ordinary miniſters of his affairs, in the rule and government of this inferior world; and this not for his own eaſe (for to infinite power nothing can be difficult or troubleſom) but for their happineſs; and he therefore employs them in his work and ſervice, that they may be capable of his favour and rewards.

And that the angels of GOD are the great miniſters of his providence here in the world, hath not only been the conſtant tradition of all ages; but is very frequently and plainly aſſerted in ſcripture. In the old teſtament we often read that GOD employed his angels to be the meſſengers of his will and pleaſure to men: and to carry good tidings and comfortable news to them upon ſeveral occaſions: as to Abraham, to foretel the miraculous birth of his ſon

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Iſaac; and afterwards to reſcue him from being ſacrificed: to Jacob, when he was ſo afraid of his brother Eſau: to Manoah and his wife, to foretel the birth of Sampſon, the great deliverer of Iſrael from the Philiſtines: and upon that great occaſion of bringing the people of Iſrael out of Egypt, and conducting them through the wilderneſs, he ſent a great and mighty angel (called "the angel of his preſence") to go before them, and guide them in their way: and the apoſtle tells us, that "the law "was delivered to them upon mount Sinai by the "diſpoſition of angels." SERM. LXXV.

On the other hand, GOD frequently made them the meſſengers of his wrath, and inſtruments of his vengeance. Thus he ſent them to foretel, and to execute that terrible deſtruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And he ſent a deſtroying angel to brandiſh his ſword in a viſible manner over Jeruſalem, and to ſmite them with the peſtilence, for David's ſin in numbering the people. And by the miniſtry of an angel he ſlew in the camp of the Aſſyrians in one night, an hundred and eighty-five thouſand. And Acts xii. 23. it is ſaid, that "the "angel of the LORD ſmote Herod," for receiving the blaſphemous acclamations of the people.

Nay, the angels ſhall be the inſtruments and executioners of GOD's vengeance upon the wicked, at the judgment of the great day. So the judge himſelf tells us, Matth. xiii. 49, 50. "So ſhall it be "at the end of the world; the angels ſhall come "forth and ſever the wicked from among the juſt, "and ſhall caſt them into the furnace of fire; there "ſhall be wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.

And that particular angels do preſide over empires and kingdoms, and ſway the weighty affairs of

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them; and by a ſecret and inviſible hand manage and bring about great changes and revolutions, both Jews and Chriſtians have collected with great probability and conſent from Daniel x. where there is mention made of the prince of the kingdom of Perſia withſtanding the angel that was ſent to Daniel, and of Michael a chief prince aſſiſting him. And of this miniſtry of angels, in the government of kingdoms, Clemens Alexandrinus ſpeaks, as of a thing out of all controverſy. I proceed to the

Third thing, which I principally intended, and ſeems to be chiefly deſigned in the text: and this is the ſpecial office and employment of good angels, in regard to good men; and for this the apoſtle expreſly tells us, that "they are ſent forth to miniſter "for them" (that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit) "who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation." In which words there are three things very conſiderable for our inſtruction and comfort.

1. Their particular deſignation and appointment for this employment, expreſs'd in theſe words, "ſent "forth," ἀποστελλόμενοι, as if they were particularly commiſſioned and appointed by God for this very end. God himſelf doth ſuperintend all affairs, and by his particular deſignation and command, the angels do fulfil his word, and execute the pleaſure of his good will towards us. Hence it is ſo frequently ſaid in ſcripture, that God ſent his angel to ſuch or ſuch a perſon, for ſuch or ſuch purpoſes.

2. You have here the general end of their employment; for good men; they are ſent forth on our behalf, and for our benefit; to take care of us and protect us, to ſuccour and comfort, to direct and aſſiſt, to reſcue and deliver us.

3. Here

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3. Here is the more ſpecial end of their employment in regard to good men, intended in thoſe words, " for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation;" hereby ſignifying, that the angels are employed about good men, with regard more particularly to their eternal happineſs, and for the conducting and furthering of the great affair of their everlaſting ſalvation. This certainly is our greateſt concernment; and therefore they have a more particular charge and care of us in regard to this.

It was a common opinion among the Heathen, and a conſtant and firmly believed tradition among the Jews, (the Sadducees only excepted, who did not believe there were angels and ſpirits) that every man (at leaſt every good man) had a guardian angel appointed him by GOD, to take a ſpecial care of him and his concernments, both ſpiritual and temporal; to guard him from dangers, to direct and proſper him in his way, and to comfort and deliver him in his affliction and diſtreſs. And therefore we find among the Jewiſh prayers, uſed by them at this day, a particular prayer, wherein they requeſt of GOD, to command the angels who have the care of human affairs, to help and aſſiſt, to preſerve and deliver them. But eſpecially they believed good angels, in their attendance upon good men, to be very active and diligent to incline them to good, and to encourage them therein, by holy emotions and ſuggeſtions, by ſecret comfort and aſſiſtances, and by oppoſing evil ſpirits, and defending us againſt their aſſaults, and by countermining their malicious deſigns and attempts upon us. And accordingly we find that the beſt men among the Jews did ſtedfaſtly believe, if not the particular guardianſhip of angels, and that every good man had his particular

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angel aſſigned to him by GOD, to take the particular charge of him; yet the common miniſtry of good angels, about good men; and their more eſpecial care of particular perſons, upon particular and great occaſions, to protect them from temporal evils, and to promote and proſper their temporal affairs and concernments.

Of this Abraham, "the father of the faithful," and "the friend of GOD," was moſt firmly perſuaded (at leaſt in matters of great moment and concernment to us) as appears by his diſcourſe with his ſteward, when he was ſending him to treat of a match for his ſon, Gen. xxiv. 40. "The LORD (ſays he) before "whom I walk, will ſend his angel with thee, and "proſper thy way." And David the "man after "GOD's own heart," does more than once declare his confident belief of the watchful care and miniſtry of angels about good men, Pſal. xxxiv. 7. "The an-"gel of the LORD encampeth about them that fear "him, and delivereth them." And Pſ. xci. 11, 12. ſpeaking of the good man, who putteth his truſt, and confidence in GOD, he tells him for his comfort and ſecurity, that the holy angels have a particular charge of him to preſerve him from all the miſchiefs and dangers to which he is expoſed; "he ſhall give his "angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy "ways; they ſhall bear thee up in their hands, leſt "thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone."

So that according to the perſuaſion of thoſe two excellent perſons, and of greateſt renown for piety in all the old teſtament, very much of the ſafety and the ſucceſs of good men, even in their temporal concernments, is to be aſcribed to the vigilant care and protection of good angels. And though this be ſeldom viſible and ſenſible to us, yet we have

great

great reaſon, upon ſo great teſtimonies, to aſſent to the truth of it. And there is no reaſon I think to doubt, but that GOD's care extends now to Chriſtians, as well as it did to the Jews; and that the angels have as much kindneſs for us, as they had for the Jews; and there is no reaſon to think, that the angels are now either dead or idle. SERM. LXXV.

Our SAVIOUR tells us, that they cannot die; and our reaſon tells us that a pure ſpirit is an active principle; and the ſcripture repreſents angels as all flame and wings. Evil ſpirits are believed by Chriſtians to be as active now, to all purpoſes of harm and miſchief, as ever: and why ſhould any man imagine, that good ſpirits are not as intent and buſy to do good? The apoſtle (I am ſure) tells us in the text, that the angels in common (all of them) do employ their ſervice about us, and wait to do good offices to us; "are they not all (ſays he) miniſtring "ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them that ſhall "be heirs of ſalvation?"

And our SAVIOUR, Matt. xviii. 10. ſeems to approve and confirm the tradition of the Jews, concerning particular guardian angels belonging to every one that believed in him, that is, to every Chriſtian; "Take heed (ſays he) that ye deſpiſe "not one of theſe little ones; for I ſay unto you, "that in heaven, their angels always behold the "face of my Father which is in heaven." And this ſeems likewiſe to have been a received opinion among the firſt Chriſtians; for we find, Acts xii. 15. that when Peter was miraculouſly releaſed out of priſon by an angel, and came to the houſe where the Chriſtians were aſſembled to pray for him, and one told them, "that Peter was at the door, they ſaid "it was his angel;" thinking that he himſelf was

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faſt in priſon: For which ſaying there could be no reaſon, had there not been a current opinion among them of guardian angels.

And becauſe the providence of GOD is more peculiarly concerned, in conducting men to eternal happineſs; it is very credible, that GOD ſhould more eſpecially ordain the miniſtry of angels about good men, for the furtherance of their ſalvation. And ſo the apoſtle tells us in the text; "are they not all "miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them "that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?" Nay, our SAVIOUR, in that remarkable place I mentioned before, Matt. xviii. 10. ſeems to intimate, that angels of a higher rank and quality are aſſigned guardians and guides to thoſe that believed on him; "but I ſay "unto you, that in heaven, their angels do always "behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven:" an alluſion to the manner of earthly kings, upon whom not all the ſervants, but the chief of the nobility do more immediately attend, and ſtand continually in their preſence; for to behold the face of the king, and to ſtand in his preſence, are phraſes uſed in ſcripture to ſignify immediate attendance upon his perſon. So that by this manner of expreſſion our SAVIOUR doth moſt ſignificantly intimate, in what eſteem good men are with GOD, whoſe care and protection he commits to the chief of the angels, to thoſe who are neareſt to him, and in higheſt favour and honour with him; as if he had ſaid, their angels are not of the ordinary rank, but ſuch as are admitted to a more immediate attendance upon the great king and governor of the world.

And no doubt it is for no mean end, that ſuch high and glorious ſpirits are employed about us; it is chiefly for the furtherance of our ſalvation; for the

the purchaſing whereof, the Son of GOD himſelf ("whom all the angels of heaven worſhip") came down from heaven, and appeared and ſuffered in our nature, that we may one day "be made like to the angels," and dwell where they are, and may "continually behold the face of our father which is in "heaven as they do." And in order to this end, it is very probable, that good angels are ready to do good offices, juſt contrary to thoſe of evil ſpirits, that is, to employ their beſt diligence and endeavour for the ſalvation of men; and that they are very ſedulous and officious to reſtrain and pull them back from ſin, and to excite and ſolicit them to that which is good; and, in a word, to do all they can to help forward the repentance and converſion of ſinners. And this may reaſonably be collected from that paſſage of our SAVIOUR, Luke xv. 10. where he tells us, "that "there is joy in the preſence of the angels of GOD, "over one ſinner that repenteth." And if they be ſo glad of the repentance of a ſinner; we may eaſily imagine how forward they are, to further and promote ſo good a work. And when ſinners are brought to repentance; we have no reaſon to doubt, but that the angels are as ready to aſſiſt their progreſs in goodneſs. SERM. LXXV.

It hath been a general, and I think not ill-grounded opinion, both of the Jews and Heathens, that good angels are more eſpecially preſent with us, and obſervant of us, and aſſiſtant to us, in the performance of all acts of religion; that they are particularly preſent at our prayers: and therefore the Jews ſpeak of a particular angel for this purpoſe, whom they call the angel of prayer; that they obſerve our vows, and our breach or performance of them. So Solomon ſeems to intimate, Eccleſ. v. 4, 6. "When

"thou

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" thou voweſt a vow unto GOD, defer not to pay " it; for he hath no pleaſure in fools; pay that " which thou haſt vowed. Suffer not thy mouth " to cauſe thy fleſh to ſin :" that is, do not intangle thy life with a raſh vow, which the frailty of human nature may make thee afterwards to break; " neither " ſay thou before the angel, that it was an error;" that is, do not in the preſence of the angel who attends upon thee, and obſerves thee, betray thine own error and raſhneſs. This I take to be the meaning of this difficult paſſage, " let not thy mouth " cauſe thy fleſh to ſin; neither ſay thou before the " angel, that it was an error."

But the angels are yet more particularly preſent in the places and at the times of GOD's publick worſhip. The placing of the cherubims in the holy of holies, ſeems to ſignify the preſence of the angels in our moſt religious addreſſes to GOD. And Plutarch ſays, that the angels are the overſeers of divine ſervice. And therefore we ought to behave ourſelves with all modeſty, reverence, and decency in the worſhip of GOD, out of regard to the angels, who are there preſent, and obſerve our carriage and behaviour. And to this the apoſtle plainly hath reſpect in that place, which by interpreters hath been thought ſo difficult, 1 Cor. xi. 10. where he ſays, " that, " for this cauſe," in the aſſembly of Chriſtians for the worſhip of GOD, " the woman ought to have " a veil upon her head," in token of ſubjection to her huſband, " becauſe of the angels;" that is, to be decently and modeſtly attired in the church, becauſe of the preſence of the holy angels; before whom we ſhould compoſe our ſelves to the greateſt external gravity and reverence, which the angels behold and obſerve, but cannot penetrate into the inward devotion

tion of our minds, which GOD only can do; and therefore with regard to him who ſees our hearts, we ſhould more particularly compoſe our minds, to the greateſt ſincerity and ſerioufneſs in our devotion. Which I would to GOD we would all duly conſider, all the while we are exerciſed in the worſhip of GOD, who chiefly regards our hearts. But we ought likewiſe to be very careful of our external behaviour, with a particular regard to the angels, who are preſent there, to ſee and obſerve the outward decency and reverence of our carriage and deportment: of which we are very careful in the preſence even of an earthly prince when he either ſpeaks to us, or we make any addreſs to him. And ſurely much more ought we to be ſo, when we are in the immediate preſence of GOD, and of his holy angels, every one of whom is a much greater prince, and of greater power, than any of the princes of this world. But how little is this conſidered, (I ſpeak to our ſhame) and by how few among us!

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And as the angels are helpful to good men, in working out their ſalvation, throughout the courſe of their lives: ſo at the hour of death, they ſtand by them, to comfort them and aſſiſt them in that needful and diſmal time, in that laſt and great conflict of frail mortality with death and the powers of darkneſs; to receive their expiring ſpirits into their charge, and to conduct them ſafely into the manſions of the bleſſed. And to this purpoſe alſo the Jews had a tradition; that the angels wait upon good men at their death, to convey their ſouls into paradiſe: which is very much countenanced by our SAVIOUR, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 22. where it is ſaid, "that when Lazarus died, he was carried "by the angels into Abraham's boſom."

Nay,

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Nay, that the angels have ſome charge and care of the bodies of good men after death, may not improbably be gathered from that paſſage in St. Jude, ver. 9. where Michael the archangel is ſaid to have "contended with the devil, about the body of Moſes." What the ground of this controverſy betwixt them was, may be moſt probably explained, by a paſſage, Deut. xxxiv. 6. where it is ſaid, "that GOD took "particular care (probably by an angel) concerning the burying of Moſes in a certain valley;" and it is added "but no man knoweth of his ſepulchre "unto this day." The devil it ſeems had a fair proſpect of laying a foundation for idolatry, in the worſhip of Moſes after his death; if he could have gotten the diſpoſal of his body, to have buried it in ſome known and publick place. And no doubt, it would have gratified him not a little, to have made him, who was ſo declared an enemy to idolatry all his life, an occaſion of it, after his death. But this GOD thought fit to prevent, in pity to the people of Iſrael, whom he ſaw upon all occaſions ſo prone to idolatry; and for that reaſon committed it to the charge of Michael the archangel, to bury his body ſecretly; and this was the thing which Michael the archangel contended with the devil about.

But before I paſs from this, I cannot but take notice of one memorable circumſtance in this conteſt, mentioned likewiſe by St. Jude, in theſe words, "yet "Michael the archangel, when contending with the "devil, he diſputed about the body of Moſes, durſt "not bring againſt him a railing accuſation." His duty reſtrained him from it, and probably his diſcretion too: as he durſt not offend GOD, in doing a thing ſo much beneath the dignity and perfection of his nature; ſo he could not but think, that the devil

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would have been too hard for him at railing; a thing SERM. LXXV.
to which as the angels have no diſpoſition, ſo I believe that they have no talent, no faculty at it. The cool conſideration whereof ſhould make all men, eſpecially thoſe who call themſelves divines, and eſpecially in controverſies about religion, aſhamed and afraid of this manner of diſputing; ſince "Michael "the archangel, even when he diſputed with the de-"vil, durſt not bring againſt him a railing accuſa-"tion."

But to proceed. This we are ſure of, that the angels ſhall be the great miniſters and inſtruments of the reſurrection of our bodies, and the reunion of them to our ſouls. For ſo our bleſſed SAVIOUR has told us, Matth. xxiv. 30, 31. That "when the Son "of man ſhall come in the clouds of heaven, with "power and great glory; he ſhall ſend his angels to "gather the elect, from the four winds, from one "end of heaven to the other."

Thus I have as briefly as I could, and ſo far as the ſcripture hath gone before us, to give us light in this matter, endeavoured to ſhew the ſeveral ways wherein good angels do miniſter in behalf of them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation. All that now remains, is to draw ſome inferences from this diſcourſe, and ſo I ſhall conclude.

Firſt, What hath been ſaid upon this argument, and ſo abundantly proved from ſcripture, may ſerve to eſtabliſh us in the belief of this truth, and to awaken us to a due conſideration of it. That the angels are inviſible to us, and that we are ſeldom ſenſible of their preſence, and the good offices they do us, is no ſufficient reaſon againſt the truth and reality of the thing; if by other arguments we are convinced of it. For by the ſame reaſon we may almoſt as well call

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in queſtion the exiſtence of GOD, and of our own ſouls; neither of which do fall under the notice of our ſenſes; and yet by other arguments we are ſufficiently convinced of them both. So in this caſe, the general conſent and tradition of mankind, concerning the exiſtence of angels, and their miniſtry about us, eſpecially being confirmed to us, by clear and expreſs teſtimony of holy ſcripture, ought to be abundant evidence to us; when we conſider that ſo general a conſent muſt have a proportionable cauſe; which can be no other, but a general tradition grounded at firſt upon revelation, and derived down to all ſucceeding ages, from the firſt ſpring and original of mankind; and ſince confirmed by manifold revelations of GOD, both in the old and new teſtament.

But yet I am ſenſible, that all this is no conviction to the perverſe and contentious. Men will not believe even the evidence of ſenſe itſelf, when they are ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed and prejudiced to the contrary: for do we not ſee great numbers of men, even ſo many as have the face to call themſelves the catholick church, that can make a ſhift, when they have a mind, either to believe or diſbelieve things contrary to the plaineſt evidence of their ſenſes? All that I ſhall ſay farther about this matter, is, that this doctrine of angels is not a peculiar doctrine either of the jewiſh or chriſtian religion, but the general doctrine of all religions that ever were; and therefore cannot be objected againſt by any but the Atheiſts.

And yet after all, I know not whence it comes to paſs, that this great truth, which is ſo comfortable to mankind, is ſo very little conſidered by us. Perhaps the corruption of ſo great a part of the chriſtian church, in the point of the worſhip of angels, may have run us ſo far into the other extreme,

to acknowledge any benefit we receive by them. But surely we may believe they do us good, without any obligation to pray to them; and may own them as the miniſters of GOD's providence, without making them the objects of our worſhip. SERM. LXXV.

I confeſs it ſeems to me a very odd thing, that the power of the devil, and his influence upon men, and the particular vigilancy and activity of evil ſpirits to tempt us to ſin, ſhould be ſo readily owned, and ſo ſenſibly talked of among Chriſtians; and yet the aſſiſtance of good angels ſhould be ſo little taken notice of, and conſidered by us. The ſcripture ſpeaks plainly of both, and the reaſons for believing both are equal: for GOD forbid but that good angels ſhould be as officious and forward to do us good, as the devil and his angels are malicious and buſy to do us miſchief. And indeed it would be very hard with mankind, if we had not as much reaſon to hope for the aſſiſtance and protection of good ſpirits, as we have cauſe to fear the malice and fury of the bad. Good angels are certainly as powerful, and have as ſtrong a propenſion and inclination to do good, as the devil has to do harm; and the number of good angels is probably much greater, than of evil ſpirits. The biggeſt numbers that are uſed in ſcripture, are applied to good angels. Dan. vii. 10. it is ſaid of "the angels about GOD's throne, that thouſand "thouſands miniſtred unto him, and ten thouſand "times ten thouſand ſtood before him." And Revelations v. 11. "the number of them" is ſaid to be, "ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſand of "thouſands." And the apoſtle to the Hebrews, ch. xii. 22. calls them, "an innumerable company "of angels."

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What then ſhould be the reaſon, that men ſhould be ſo apt to own the ſnares and temptations, which the devil lays before us, in all our ways; but take ſo little notice of the attendance and good offices, done to us by good Spirits? I can imagine but theſe two reaſons, and I am ſorry I can find no better; that we are more mindful of injuries than of benefits: and are glad to take in others for the excuſe of our faults; but are loth any ſhould come in for a ſhare in the good that is done by us. And yet methinks it ſhould be a very comfortable conſideration to us, againſt the enmity and cunning of the devil and his angels; that the holy angels of GOD are as intent and induſtrious to do us good, and to help forward our ſalvation, as evil ſpirits can be to work our ruin and deſtroy us.

Secondly, We ſhould with great thankfulneſs acknowledge the great goodneſs of GOD to us, who takes ſuch care of us, as to appoint his angels, and to give them particular commiſſion and charge concerning us, to protect and aſſiſt us in all our ways, and eſpecially to promote the great concernment of our eternal happineſs: and that not only ſome particular and inferior ſpirits but the chief miniſters of this great king of the world, thoſe that "ſtand in his pre-"ſence, and behold his face;" and not a few of theſe, but the whole order of them are employed about us. So the apoſtle ſeems to ſay, by the queſtion which he puts in the text, "are they not all miniſtring ſpirits, "ſent forth to miniſter?" That is, all, at one time or other. And though they be principally appointed to miniſter to us in order to our ſalvation; yet we have no reaſon to doubt but GOD employs them many times for our temporal ſafety; and makes uſe of them more eſpecially in thoſe great revolution

which his cauſe and religion are more immediately concerned. SERM. LXXV.

In ſuch a caſe, it is not at all incredible, that God ſhould give his angels a particular charge, concerning thoſe that fight his battles; to pitch about their camps, and ſecretly to aſſiſt them againſt their enemies, and to ward off, and put by many dangerous blows and thruſts, which are made at them; and wonderfully to preſerve them, when the inſtruments of death fly abut them, and do execution on every ſide of them. To what can we aſcribe ſuch and ſo many remarkable deliverances of a perſon upon whom ſo much depends; but either to the immediate hand of God, or to the miniſtry of angels? And where God is provided ſo abundantly, with ſuch powerful beings and miniſters of his will; though they may be inviſible to us, yet there is great reaſon to believe, that he very ſeldom works without them.

And now what an aſtoniſhing regard is this, which the great God is pleaſed to have for the ſons of men, that he ſhould make the whole creation ſerviceable to us; not only the viſible creation, for the ſupport of our bodies, and the diverſion of our minds; but even the nobleſt of all his creatures, the great and glorious inhabitants of the inviſible world, mightily ſurpaſſing us mortal men, in the ſimplicity and purity of their nature, in the quickneſs and largeneſs of their underſtandings, and in their power and vigour of acting; I ſay, that God ſhould give theſe excellent and glorious beings the charge over us, and ſend them forth to miniſter to us, for the ſafeguard of our perſons, for the ſucceſs of our affairs, and for the ſecurity and furtherance of our eternal ſalvation! "Lord, what is man that thou art" thus "mindful "of him," that when "thou madeſt him lower

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" than the angels," thou ſhouldſt yet " make the " angels to miniſter unto him ! "

Thirdly, If the angels have the particular charge of good men, we ſhould take heed how we deſpiſe, or be any way injurious to them: for how deſpicable ſoever they may appear to us, they are certainly very dear to GOD; ſince he deems them ſo conſiderable, as to employ his chief miniſters about them, and to commit the charge of them to thoſe, who by their office do more immediately attend upon himſelf. This is our SAVIOUR's own argument, Mat. xviii. 10. " Take " heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe little ones; " for I ſay unto you, their angels do continually be- " hold the face of your father, which is in heaven." With how much contempt ſoever we may look upon a poor good man; he hath friends and patrons of a higher ſort, than any of the princes of this world.

Fourthly, If GOD appointed angels to be miniſtring Spirits in our behalf; we may thence very reaſonably conclude, that GOD did not intend, that we ſhould worſhip them. This ſeems to be a clear conſequence, if the reaſoning of the angel in the revelation be good; where he forbids St. John to worſhip him; " becauſe he was his fellow ſervant." Yea the conſequence ſeems to be yet ſtronger from the text; that if they be not only fellow-ſervants but do in ſome ſort miniſter unto us; then we are not to worſhip them.

And yet this practice is openly avowed in the church of Rome; though it be reproved ſo very ſeverely by the apoſtle, as an apoſtaſy from chriſtianity, Coloſſ. ii. 18, 19. " Let no man (ſays he) deceive " you, in a voluntary humility, and worſhipping " angels; not holding the head;" as if

nouncing of CHRIST, out of a pretended humility, to make uſe of other mediators beſides him to the Father. And notwithſtanding alſo that the angel in the revelation does ſo vehemently forbid it, ὅρα μή by no means, upon no terms to do it: and he forbids it for ſuch a reaſon, as makes it for ever unlawful; namely, that we ought not to worſhip thoſe, who ſerve and worſhip GOD together with us; "do "it not, ſays the angel, I am thy fellow-ſervant, "worſhip thou GOD." In which words, he plainly directs us to the ſole and proper object of our worſhip. SERM. LXXV.

Bellarmine the great champion of the popiſh cauſe, never uſed more groſs and apparent ſhuffling, than in anſwer to this text. He ſays firſt, why are we reproved for doing what St. John did? To which the anſwer is very eaſy; becauſe St. John himſelf was reproved by an angel, for doing what he did. And now that his queſtion is anſwered, one might, methinks, aſk him a croſs queſtion or two. Why does the church of Rome preſume to do that, which an angel does ſo expreſly forbid to be done? Or was it fit for St. John to worſhip one, who (according to Bellarmine) was ſo ignorant in the doctrine of the catholick church, as to reprove him for doing his duty? As is evident from his ſecond crafty anſwer to this text, That St. John did well to give due worſhip to the angel: and yet it is plain from this text, that the angel did not think the worſhip which St. John gave him, to be his due.

It is very hard to imagine, but that a man of Bellarmine's underſtanding, did intend to give up the cauſe, in his anſwers to this text: but if he was in earneſt, then the matter is brought to this plain and

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ſhort iſſue; whether it be fitter for us to believe a cardinal of Rome, or an angel of GOD?

Laſtly, We ſhould imitate the holy angels, by endeavouring to ſerve GOD as they do, in miniſtring to the good of others. Whilſt we are in the body, in this ſtate of infirmity and imperfection; though we cannot ſerve GOD with the ſame activity and vigour that the bleſſed angels do, yet we may in the ſame ſincerity, and with the ſame true pleaſure and delight.

And we ſhould learn alſo of them, to condeſcend to the meaneſt ſervices, for the good of others. If the angels, who are no ways allied to us, do ſo much excel us, in the dignity and perfection of their nature, (for though David ſays, that "GOD made man "a little lower than the angels;" his meaning is, that he made him next below the angels in the rank of beings; but yet very diſtant from them in perfection) I ſay if thoſe glorious creatures, who are the chief of the ways and works of GOD, do not think much to humble themſelves to be miniſters on our behalf; ſhall we be ſo proud as to think much to ſtoop to the loweſt offices, to ſerve one another?

You ſee, my brethren, what is the conſtant work and employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above; to do good to men, eſpecially in order to their eternal happineſs; and this is the higheſt degree of charity, and charity is the higheſt perfection of men and angels: ſo that to employ ourſelves, with all our minds, and with all our might, to help forward the ſalvation of others, is to be good angels (I had almoſt ſaid to be a kind of gods) to men.

I hope that we all of us do hope one day to be like the angels, in the purity and perfection of their

nature. So our SAVIOUR has told us, that "at the "resurrection we shall be like the angels:" now as they are the patterns of our hope and happiness; so let us make them the examples of our duty and obedience: according as our SAVIOUR hath taught us to pray, "that GOD's will may be done on earth, as "it is in heaven; that is, that we may serve GOD, and do his will here on earth, (so far as the infirmity of our nature and of our present state will admit) with the same readiness and diligence, with the same chearfulness and zeal, that the holy and blessed angels do in heaven. And let us aspire continually in our minds, after that blessed time, when we shall be free from sin and sorrow, from affliction and pain, from diseases and death; when we shall serve GOD without distraction, and do his will without weariness, and shall "be for ever with the LORD, amidst "an innumerable company of angels, and the spi-"rits of just men made perfect." SERM. LXXV.

Finally, Let us bless GOD, as for all the visible effects of his merciful providence towards us, so likewise for the invisible aids and protection of his holy angels; many times probably vouchsafed to us, when we are but little aware of it. But above all, let us bless him for his Son, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who "was made a little lower than the angels," that is, a mortal man; "that by the suffering of death" for our sakes, "he might be clothed with glory and "honour, according to the working of that mighty "power which GOD wrought in CHRIST, when he "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own "right hand in the heavenly places, far above all "principalities and powers, and might, and domi-"nion, and every name that is named, not only in

" this world, but alſo in that which is to come. To " him, O Father, with thee and the Holy Ghoſt, be " all honour and glory, dominion and power, both " now and for ever," Amen.

Preached on St. Luke's day.

SERMON LXXVI.

The reputation of good men after death.

PSALM CXII. 6,

The latter part of the verſe.

The righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance.

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AS the deſire and hope of immortality, which is implanted in human nature, is ſome evidence of the thing; ſo likewiſe that natural deſire which is in men, to have a good name perpetuated, and to be remembered, and mentioned with honour, when they are dead and gone, is a ſign, that there is in human nature ſome preſage of a life after death; in which they hope, among other rewards of well-doing, to meet with this alſo, to be well ſpoken of to poſterity: and though probably we ſhould not know the good that is ſaid of us, when we are dead, yet it is an encouragement to virtue, to be ſecured of it before-hand; and to find by experience, that they who have done their part well in this life, go off with

with applauſe; and that the memory of their good actions is preſerved and tranſmitted to poſterity. SERM. LXXVI.

And among the many advantages of piety and virtue, this is not altogether inconſiderable, that it reflects an honour upon our memory after death; which is a thing much more valuable, than to have our bodies preſerved from putrefaction: for that I think is the meaning of Solomon, when he prefers a good name before precious ointment. Eccl. vii. 1. "A good name is better than precious ointment." This they uſed in embalming of dead bodies, to preſerve them from noiſomneſs and corruption: but a good name preſerves a man's memory, and makes it grateful to poſterity; which is a far greater benefit, than that of a precious ointment which ſerves only to keep a dead body from ſtench and rottenneſs.

I ſhall briefly explain the words, and then conſider the matter contained in them; "the righteous "ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance." By the righteous is probably here meant the good man in general; for though juſtice and righteouſneſs are in ſcripture frequently uſed for that particular virtue, whereby a man is diſpoſed to render to every man his own; which is known by the name of juſtice; yet it is leſs frequently, and perhaps in this place, uſed in a larger ſenſe, ſo as to comprehend all piety and virtue. For ſo the righteous man is deſcribed at the beginning of this pſalm, "bleſſed is the man "that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in "his commandments:" and he is oppoſed to the wicked man, ver. 10. "the wicked ſhall ſee it, and be "grieved;" that is, he ſhall be troubled to ſee the proſperity of the righteous; the manifold bleſſings of his life, and the good name he ſhall leave behind him at his death; which is the meaning "of his being in

SERM. LXXVI. "everlaſting remembrance;" that is, long after he is dead, perhaps for many ages, he ſhall be well ſpoken of, and his name mentioned with honour, and his good deeds recorded and remembered to all poſterity.

So that the ſenſe of the words amounts to this, that eminently good men, do commonly leave a good name behind them, and tranſmit a grateful memory of themſelves to after-ages. I ſay commonly, for ſo we are to underſtand this kind of ſayings; not that they are ſtrictly, and univerſally true, without exception; but uſually, and for the moſt part. It is poſſible, that a good man may ſoon be forgotten, by the malice of men, or through the partiality and iniquity of the age, may have his name blemiſhed after death, and be miſ-repreſented to poſterity: but for the moſt part it is otherwiſe; and though the world be very wicked, yet it ſeldom deals ſo hardly and unjuſtly with men of eminent goodneſs and virtue, as to defraud them of their due praiſe and commendation after death. It very frequently happens otherwiſe to good men, whilſt they are alive; nay they are then very ſeldom ſo juſtly treated, as to be generally eſteemed and well ſpoken of, and to be allowed their due praiſe and reputation: but after death, their good name is generally ſecured and vindicated, and poſterity does them that right, which perhaps the age wherein they lived denied to them. Therefore in the proſecution of this argument, I ſhall enquire into theſe two things.

Firſt, whence it comes to paſs, that good men are very often defrauded of their juſt praiſe and reputation, whilſt they are alive; And,

Secondly, what ſecurity they have of a good name after death?

Firſt,

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Firſt, whence it comes to paſs, that good men are ſo frequently defrauded of their juſt praiſe and reputation, while they are alive? and to give ourſelves full ſatisfaction in this matter, two things are fit to be enquired into.

1. From what cauſe this proceeds?

2. For what reaſon the providence of God doth often permit it?

(1.) From what cauſe it proceeds, that good men have ſo often the hard fate to be ill ſpoken of, and to be ſeverely cenſur'd, and to have their worth much detracted from, while they are alive?

And this proceeds partly from good men themſelves; and partly from others.

1. Good men themſelves, are many times the cauſe of it. For the beſt men are imperfect; and preſent and viſible imperfections do very much leſſen and abate the reputation of a man's goodneſs. It cannot be otherwiſe, but that the luſtre of a great piety and virtue ſhould be ſomewhat obſcured, by that mixture of human frailty, which does neceſſarily attend this ſtate of imperfection: and though a man by great care and conſideration, by great vigilancy and pains with himſelf, be arrived to that degree and pitch of goodneſs, as to have but a very few viſible failings, and thoſe ſmall, in compariſon; yet when theſe come to be ſcann'd and commented upon, by envy, or ill-will, they will be ſtrangely inflamed and magnified, and made much greater, and more than in truth they are. But there are few perſons in the world, of that excellent goodneſs, but beſides the common and more pardonable frailties of humanity, they do now and then diſcover ſomething, which might perhaps juſtly deſerve a ſevere cenſure,

if

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if ſome amends were not made for it, by many and great virtues.

Very good men are ſubject to conſiderable imprudences, and ſudden paſſions; and eſpecially to an affected ſeverity and moroſeneſs of carriage; which is very diſguſtful, and apt to beget diſlike. And they are the more incident to theſe kind of imperfections; becauſe out of a juſt hatred of the vicious cuſtoms and practices of the world, and to keep out of the way of temptation, they think it ſafeſt to retire from the world as much as they can; being loth to venture themſelves, more than needs, in ſo infectious an air. By this means, their ſpirits are apt to be a little ſour, and they muſt neceſſarily be ignorant of many points of civility, and good humour; which are great ornaments of virtue, though not of the eſſence of it.

Now two or three faults in a good man, if an uncharitable man have but the handling and managing of them, may eaſily caſt a conſiderable blemiſh upon his reputation; becauſe the better the man is, ſo much the more conſpicuous are his faults; as ſpots are ſooneſt diſcovered, and moſt taken notice of, in a pure and white garment. Beſides that, in matters of cenſure, mankind do much incline to the harder ſide; and but very few perſons are ſo charitable and equal, as to conſtrue things to the beſt ſenſe, and to conſider a man all together; and fairly to ſet the good that is in him againſt his faults and imperfections. But,

2. Though good men many times contribute too much to the leſſening of their own reputation, with thoſe among whom they live; yet the principal cauſe of their ſuffering in this kind is not from themſelves, but others; and that upon theſe three accounts. 1. From

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1. From the hatred and oppoſition of bad men to holineſs and virtue; and theſe are commonly the greateſt number, and make the loudeſt cry. They are declared enemies to goodneſs; and then how can it be expected, they ſhould have any great kindneſs for good men? They want virtue themſelves; and therefore they think themſelves upbraided by the good quality of others.

This enmity of wicked men againſt the righteous, and the true reaſon of it, is very well expreſs'd, in the wiſdom of Solomon, chap. ii. 12. "Let us (ſay "they) lye in wait for the righteous; becauſe he "is not for our turn, and is clean contrary to our "doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the "law, and he objecteth, to our infamy, the ſins of "our youth; he was made to reprove our thoughts, "therefore he is grievous unto us, even to behold; "for his life is not like other men, he is quite of "another faſhion; we are eſteemed of him as re-"probate ſilver, he abſtaineth from our ways, as "from filthineſs." This is that which filleth the minds of wicked men with malice againſt the righteous; and malice will eaſily invent ways to blaſt any man's reputation. Good men do ſometimes, as it is their duty, reprove thoſe that are bad; or if they do it not in word, yet they upbraid them in their actions, and contrary courſe of life; and both theſe are grievous and provoking to them. Not but that wicked men are many times in their conſciences convinced of the real goodneſs of thoſe whom they ſpeak againſt; but they will not own it, leſt in ſo doing they ſhould condemn themſelves.

2. Another cauſe of this is the envy of thoſe, who perhaps have ſome degree of goodneſs themſelves. For great virtue is apt to raiſe envy in thoſe who

fall

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fall ſhort of it; and this makes thoſe who are but imperfectly good, to detract from the eminent worth of others; becauſe they are ſenſible, they are outſhined by them, and that it occaſions a diſadvantageous compariſon, and makes their defects taken notice of.

They can endure a man that is moderately good, and keeps pace with his neighbours: but if he endeavour to outſtrip them, they preſently combine againſt him, and take all opportunities to undermine his reputation; and will be very glad, either to find a blot in his eſcutcheon, or to fix one there.

3. There is ſomething in the very preſence and nearneſs of goodneſs and virtue, which is apt to leſſen it.

In matters of ſenſe, the nearer the object is, the bigger it appears; and the farther diſtant it is from us, the leſs it ſeems to be: but here it is quite otherwiſe; men are not ſo apt to value preſent worth, when yet they will reverence it mightily at a diſtance.

I know not whence it comes to paſs, but ſo we certainly find it; that men are more ſenſible of the goodneſs and excellency of any thing, under the want of it, than while they enjoy it; and do uſually value it more when it is gone, than they did whilſt it was preſent with them. Whilſt we live with good men, and converſe with them every day, we take but little notice of them; but no ſooner are they departed, but we admire them, and every man's mouth is open to celebrate their good qualities. Perhaps familiarity, and acquaintance, and converſation does inſenſibly beget ſomething of contempt; but whatever the reaſon of it be, we find the thing moſt certainly true in experience.

(2.) Let

(2.) Let us consider in the next place, for what reasons the providence of God permits it thus to be? I shall mention but these two. SERM. LXXVI.

1. To keep good men humble, and, as the expression is in Job, "to hide pride from men."

God's providence, in the disposal and ordering of things in this world, seems rather to consult our safety, than our satisfaction; and the security of our virtue, than the full reward of it. Now if good men should always meet with that clear esteem and reputation, which their goodness deserves, they would be in great danger of being puft up with a proud conceit of themselves; and pride is enough to supplant the greatest virtue in the world; such a dead fly, as this, were sufficient to spoil a box of the most precious ointment. For man is an ambitious creature, and vain above all things; so vain, as not only to be covetous of praise, but even patient of flattery; and the best of men lye too open, on this blind side of human nature; and therefore God, who knows our frame, and how apt dust and ashes are to be proud, hath in his wise and merciful providence so disposed things, that good men are seldom exposed to the full force of so strong a temptation. And for this reason, he lets loose envious and malicious tongues, to detract from good men, for a check to the vanity of human nature, and to keep their virtue safe, under the protection of humility.

And this is the way likewise to secure the reputation which they have, and which otherwise would be in danger of being lost: for he that is once proud of the esteem he hath got, takes the readiest way to fall into contempt; and certainly it is better of the two, that our reputation should suffer a little by the malice of others: than be ruin'd by our own pride and vanity.

God

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God does not envy good men the reputation of their goodneſs and virtue; but he knows the weakneſs of human nature, and "will not ſuffer it to be "tempted, above what it is able." When good men are grown up to perfection, and able to bear it, as they will be when they come to heaven, their good name ſhall be fully vindicated, and they ſhall have praiſe, not only from men, but from angels, and from God himſelf.

2. This life is not the proper ſeaſon of reward, but of work and ſervice.

In this life, God is pleaſed to give ſome preſent encouragement to piety and virtue, but reſerves the main of our recompence, to be beſtowed upon us at the end of our work. When our courſe is finiſhed, then, and not before, we muſt expect our crown; when our accounts are caſt up, and ſtated, and it appears what improvement we have made of our talents, then will come, the *euge bone ſerve*, "well "done good and faithful ſervant." In the mean time, good men muſt be content with ſuch a portion of eſteem, as an envious and ill-natured world will afford them.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing I propoſed to enquire into; whence it comes to paſs, that good men are frequently defrauded of their due praiſe and reputation, while alive? I proceed to the

Second enquiry, namely, what ſecurity good men have of a good name after death?

And the true account of this is to be given, partly from the providence of God, and partly from the nature of the thing.

(1.) From the providence of God: which is concerned herein, upon a twofold account.

1. In reſpect of the equity of it.

2. In

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2. In regard of the example of it.

1. In reſpect of the equity of it. God, who will not be behind-hand with any man, concerns himſelf, to ſecure to good men the proper reward of their piety and virtue. Now praiſe is one of the moſt proper recompences of good and virtuous actions; this good men ſeldom meet with in this life, without a great deal of allay and abatement; and therefore the providence of God hath ſo ordered things, that it ſhould come in the propereſt ſeaſon, when our work is done, and when we are out of the danger of the temptation of it.

2. In regard of the example of it. It is a great argument to virtue, and encouragement to men, to act their part well, to ſee good men applauded, when they go off the ſtage. Every man that hath any ſpark of generoſity in him, is deſirous of fame; and though men care not how ſoon it comes, yet they will be glad to have it after death, rather than not at all. Piety and virtue would be but very melancholy and uncomfortable things; if they ſhould always be ſo unfortunate, as never to meet with due eſteem and approbation: but when men are aſſured, that they ſhall have this reward, one time or other, and obſerve it to be ſo in experience; this is a great ſpur and encouragement to do virtuouſly: and a great mind, that hath a juſt ſenſe of reputation and a good name, will be content to lay in for it beforehand; and patiently to wait the time, which God knows fitteſt for the beſtowing of it.

(2.) The other part of the account of this truth, is to be given from the nature of the thing: becauſe death removes and takes away the chief obſtacle of a good man's reputation. For then his defects are out of ſight, and men are contented that his imperfections

SERM. LXXVI. fections ſhould be buried in his grave with him. Death hath put him out of the reach of malice and envy, his worth and excellency does now no longer ſtand in other mens light; his great virtues are at a diſtance, and not ſo apt to be brought into compariſon, to the prejudice and diſadvantage of the living; *mortui non mordent*; the example of the dead is not ſo cutting a reproof to the vice of the living; the good man is removed out of the way, and his example, how bright ſoever, is not ſo ſcorching and troubleſom at a diſtance; and therefore men are generally contented, to give him his due character.

Beſides, that there is a certain civility in human nature, which will not ſuffer men to wrong the dead, and to deny them the juſt commendation of their worth. Even the ſcribes and phariſees (as bad a ſort of men as we can well imagine) though they were juſt like their fathers in perſecuting and ſlaying the prophets, while they were alive; yet had they a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue after they were dead, and thought no honour too great to be done to them. They would be at the charge of raiſing monuments to the memory of thoſe good men, whom their fathers had ſlain; and whom they would certainly have uſed in the very ſame manner, had they either lived in the days of thoſe prophets, or thoſe prophets had lived in their days, as our SAVIOUR plainly told them.

All that now remains is, to draw ſome inferences from what hath been ſaid, by way of application; and they ſhall be theſe three.

1. To vindicate the honour and reſpect which the chriſtian church, for many ages, hath paid to the memory of the firſt teachers and martyrs of our religion.

2. To encourage us to piety and goodneſs, from this conſideration; that "the righteous ſhall be in "everlaſting remembrance." SERM. LXXVI.

3. That when we pretend to honour the memory of good men, we would be careful to imitate their holineſs and virtue.

1. To vindicate the honour, which the chriſtian church hath for many ages done to the firſt teachers and martyrs of our religion; I mean more eſpecially to the holy apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR; to whoſe honour, the chriſtian church hath thought fit to ſet apart ſolemn times, for the commemoration of their piety and ſuffering, and to ſtir up others to the imitation of them.

This certainly can with no good colour, either from ſcripture or reaſon, be pretended to be unlawful; and when David here ſays, "the righteous "ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance;" he cannot certainly be thought to exclude the moſt ſolemn way of commemorating their piety and virtue.

I do not pretend, this cuſtom can be derived from the very firſt ages of chriſtianity; but ſurely it is ſufficient, for the lawfulneſs of it, that it is no where forbidden; nay it is rather required here in the text; the beſt way to preſerve the memory of good men, being thus to commemorate them. And it may be of great uſe to us, if it be not our own fault; the ſetting before our eyes, the holy lives of excellent men, being in its own nature apt to excite us to the imitation of them.

Beſides that I could tell you, that though this cannot be proved ſo ancient, as ſome vainly pretend; yet it is of great antiquity in the church, and did begin in ſome of the beſt ages of chriſtianity. *Memoriæ Martyrum*, the meetings of chriſtians at the tombs

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cellent perſons, who have gone before us; the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, and all thoſe bleſſed ſaints and martyrs, "who were faithful to the death, "and have received a crown of life and im-"mortality."

We ſhould repreſent to ourſelves the piety of their actions, and the patience and conſtancy of their ſufferings, that we may imitate their virtues, and "be "followers of them, who through faith and patience, "have inherited the promiſes; and ſeeing we are "compaſſed about with ſuch a cloud of witneſſes," we ſhould "lay aſide every weight, and run with "patience the race that is ſet before us."

Let us imagine all thoſe great examples of piety and virtue, ſtanding about us in a throng, and fixing their eyes upon us. How ought we to demean ourſelves in ſuch a preſence, and under the eye of ſuch witneſſes! and how ſhould we be aſhamed to do any thing, that is unworthy of ſuch excellent patterns, and bluſh to look upon our own lives, when we remember theirs! Good GOD! at what a diſtance do the greateſt part of Chriſtians follow thoſe examples! and while we honour them with our lips, how unlike are we to them in our lives!

Why do we thus reproach our ſelves with theſe glorious patterns? Let us either reſolve to imitate their virtues, or to make no mention of their names; for while we celebrate the examples of ſaints and holy men, and yet contradict them in our lives, we either mock them, or upbraid our ſelves.

Now the GOD of peace, who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, &c.

SER-

SERMON LXXVII.

Preached on All-saints day, 1684.

The duty of imitating the primitive teachers, and patterns of christianity.

HEB. XIII. 7.

The latter part of the verse.

Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

The whole verse runs thus,

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of GOD; *whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

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THE great scope and design of this epistle, is to persuade the Jews, who were newly converted to christianity, to continue stedfast in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it was attended withal; and to encourage them hereto, among many other arguments which the apostle makes use of, he doth several times in this epistle propound to them the examples and patterns of saints and holy men, that were gone before them; especially those of their own nation, who in their respective ages had given remarkable testimony of their faith in GOD, and constant adherence to the truth, chap. vi. 11, 12. "And we de-"sire, that every one of you do shew the same di-"ligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the "end: that ye be not slothful; but followers of

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" them, who through faith and patience inherit the " promiſes." And chap. xi. he gives a catalogue of the eminent heroes and ſaints of the old teſtament, who by faith had done ſuch wonders, and given ſuch teſtimony of their patience and conſtancy, in doing and ſuffering the will of GOD; from whence he infers, chap. xii. 1. that we ought to take pattern and heart from ſuch examples, to perſevere in our chriſtian courſe; " wherefore ſeeing we alſo are com- " paſſed about with ſo great a cloud of" martyrs, or " witneſſes, let us lay aſide every weight, and the " ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run " with patience the race that is ſet before us;" eſpecially ſince they had greater examples than theſe, nearer to them, and more freſh in memory; the great example of our LORD, the founder of our religion; and of the firſt teachers of chriſtianity, the diſciples and apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR. The example of our LORD himſelf, the captain and rewarder of our faith, ver. 2. of that xiith chap. " Looking unto JESUS the author and finiſher of " our faith, who, for the joy that was ſet before him, " endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame:" ver. 3. " For conſider him who endured ſuch contradiction " of ſinners againſt himſelf, leſt ye be wearied, and " faint in your minds." This indeed is the great pattern of Chriſtians, and, in regard of the great perfection of it, ſurpaſſeth all other patterns, and ſeems to make them uſeleſs; as having in it the perfection of the divinity, not in its full brightneſs, (which would be apt to dazzle rather than direct us) but allayed and ſhadowed with the infirmities of human nature; and for that reaſon, more accommodate and familiar to us, than the divine perfections abſtractedly conſidered.

But

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But yet becauſe our bleſſed SAVIOUR was GOD as well as man, and clear of all ſtain of ſin, (for though he was clothed with the infirmities, yet he was free from the corruption of human nature) therefore the examples of mere men, liable to ſin as we are, may in many reſpects be more ſuitable and accommodate, to encourage us to the imitation of thoſe virtues, which are attainable by us, in this ſtate of imperfection; for which reaſon the apoſtle hath thought fit likewiſe to propoſe to us, the higheſt examples of that kind, the firſt teachers of our religion; for of theſe he ſeems to ſpeak here in the text, namely thoſe apoſtles, or apoſtolical men, by whom they had been inſtructed in the faith of CHRIST, but who were now departed this life; it being very probable, that the apoſtle here ſpeaks of ſuch as were dead, when he ſays, "remember them, which have the rule over "you," (or, thoſe that have been your guides) "who have ſpoken to you the word of GOD, whoſe "faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation."

I ſay this is very probable, becauſe he minds them to remember, which ſuppoſeth them to be abſent; but eſpecially, becauſe he minds them, to conſider the end of their converſation; by which ſurely he means the bleſſed ſtate of thoſe good men after death: which is elſewhere called, "the end of our faith, even "the ſalvation of our ſouls," 1 Pet. i. 9. So likewiſe, Rom. vi. 22. this is ſaid to be the end of a holy life; "ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end, "everlaſting life." And it very much favours this interpretation, that the apoſtle afterwards ſpeaks of the living guides, and governors of the church, ver. 17. "Obey them which have the rule over you, and "ſubmit your ſelves, for they watch for your ſouls."

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So that it is highly probable, that the apoſtle here ſpeaks of ſuch guides, and governors of the church, as had once been over them, but were now departed this life; and therefore he might with more freedom and leſs envy, recommend their example to them, and bid them call to mind their faith, and exemplary converſation among them, and propoſe it for a pattern to themſelves, conſidering the happy end of it, viz. the bleſſed ſtate they were now in, and the glorious reward they were made partakers of, in another life.

In the words thus explained, you have,

I. A duty enjoined; which is, to propoſe to ourſelves, for our imitation, the examples of good men, that have gone before us; eſpecially the primitive patterns of chriſtianity, and the firſt teachers of our religion. "Remember them which have been your "guides, and have ſpoken to you the word of GOD, "whoſe faith follow."

II. The motive or encouragement to it, from the conſideration of the reward of it; conſidering the end of their converſation.

I. The duty enjoined; which is, to propoſe to ourſelves, for our imitation, the example of good men, that have gone before us; eſpecially the primitive patterns of chriſtianity, and firſt teachers of our religion. "Remember them which have the rule "over you," that have been your guides, "and have "ſpoken to you the word of GOD, whoſe faith fol-"low." In which words, the apoſtle bids them call to mind their firſt guides and inſtructors in chriſtianity, whom they had known, and heard, and converſed with in this world, but who now reſted from their labours, and were receiving the reward of them; to remember the doctrines they had heard from them,

them, and the virtues they had ſeen in them; and to embrace the one, and imitate the other. SERM. LXXVII.

Thus we cannot remember the primitive teachers, and patterns of chriſtianity, the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR; becauſe we did not perſonally know them, and converſe with them, living at the diſtance of many ages from their time: but we may do that which is equivalent, and a kind of remembrance of them; we may commemorate their faith, and the virtue and holineſs of their lives; and what we hear and read of them, we may propoſe for patterns to ourſelves, and copy them out in our lives and actions: and this is our duty, and the ſame in ſubſtance with theirs, who had the happineſs to know, and converſe with thoſe excellent perſons, to hear them preach, and to ſee the rules and precepts of that holy doctrine, which they taught, exemplified in their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall do theſe three things.

Firſt, Shew why amongſt all the examples of good men, we ſhould more eſpecially propoſe to our imitation, the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion.

Secondly, Wherein we ſhould imitate them. The apoſtle expreſſeth it in one word, in their faith; "whoſe faith follow."

Thirdly, The encouragement to this, from the conſideration of the happy ſtate they are in, and the glorious rewards they are made partakers of; "conſi-" "dering the end of their converſation."

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, why among all the examples of good men, we ſhould more eſpecially propoſe to our imitation, the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion, I mean, the holy apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, "whoſe faith," we ſhould

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ſhould endeavour "to follow," and to imitate the holineſs and virtue of their converſation. For theſe certainly come neareſt to that moſt perfect, and excellent pattern of all goodneſs, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, and are the faireſt tranſcripts of that unblemiſhed original. Hence it is that St. Paul ſo frequently exhorts Chriſtians to imitate his example, and the examples of the other apoſtles; it being reaſonable to preſume, that they came neareſt to the pattern of our LORD. 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Be ye followers of me, "even as I alſo am of CHRIST," Phil. iii. 17. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark "them which walk ſo, as ye have us for an en- "ſample. For our converſation is in heaven."

And this is reaſonable, that the firſt in every kind ſhould be the rule and pattern of the reſt, and of all that follow after; becauſe it is likely to be moſt perfect. In proceſs of time, the beſt inſtitutions are apt to decline, and by inſenſible degrees to ſwerve, and depart from the perfection of their firſt ſtate; and therefore it is a good rule, to preſerve things from corruption and degeneracy, often to look back to the firſt inſtitution, and by that to correct thoſe imperfections and errors which will almoſt unavoidably creep in with time.

If we would preſerve that purity of faith and manners, which our religion requires, we ſhould have frequent recourſe to the primitive teachers and patterns of chriſtianity, and endeavour to bring our belief and lives to as near a conformity with theirs, as is poſſible. Who ſo likely to deliver the faith and doctrine of CHRIST pure, and uncorrupted, as the primitive teachers of it, who received it from our LORD himſelf; and were by an extraordinary aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, ſecured from error and

miſtake

miſtake in the delivery of it? And who ſo likely to bring their lives and converſations to an exact conformity with this holy doctrine, as they, who were ſo thoroughly inſtructed in it by the beſt maſter, and ſhewn the practice of it in the moſt perfect example of holineſs and virtue? Great reaſon there is therefore, why all Chriſtians ſhould follow their faith, and make their converſation more eſpecially the pattern of their lives. SERM. LXXVII.

The want of a due regard to theſe fountains of chriſtian doctrine, and the firſt and beſt patterns of chriſtian practice, hath been the great cauſe of that foul degeneracy of the Romiſh church, both in the doctrine and practice of chriſtianity. They do not follow the faith of the apoſtles, the firſt fathers and teachers of chriſtianity; but of the fathers of the council of Lateran and Trent. Thus have they "forſaken the fountain of living waters," the holy ſcriptures, "and have hewn to themſelves broken ciſterns, "that will hold no water;" the doctrines and traditions of men. Nay, they have ſtopt up this "fountain of living waters" from the people, and forbid them to come to it; and forced them to drink of thoſe impure and puddled ſtreams, which they let out to them; and inſtead of the lives of the holy apoſtles, and thoſe eminent graces and virtues which ſhined forth in them, they repreſent to them the patterns of new ſaints; ſome of which neither they nor their fathers knew, and indeed never were in being; as St. Almanach, and St. Synoris, and ſeveral others; many of them ſo far from being ſaints, that they may be reckoned among the worſt of men; (for inſtance, our countryman Thomas a Becket, who for pride and rebellion may almoſt vie with Lucifer himſelf; and yet this ill man and worſt of ſubjects, was canonized

to

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to that height, as for two hundred years together, to engroſs the worſhip of theſe weſtern parts of the world, and to impoveriſh the ſhrines of all other ſaints, even of the bleſſed virgin herſelf;) others, ſuch ideots, or hot-headed fanaticks, that he that reads their lives, would take them to be fools and madmen, rather than ſaints, (as Francis, and Dominick, and Ignatius Loyola, and ſeveral others of the ſame ſtamp;) and many the very beſt of them, ſo diſguiſed by their legends, that inſtead of the ſubſtantial virtues of a good life, their ſtory is made up of falſe and fantaſtical miracles, and ridiculous freaks of ſuperſtition.

All which conſidered, there is great reaſon, why we ſhould have recourſe to the primitive patterns of faith and holineſs, "and be followers of them, "who" we are ſure "were followers of CHRIST." I proceed to the

Second thing I propoſed, namely, wherein we ſhould imitate theſe patterns. And the apoſtle expreſſeth it in one word, in their faith, "whoſe faith "follow." And the word faith is frequently in the new teſtament uſed ſo largely, as to comprehend the whole condition of the goſpel; a firm belief of the doctrine of it, and the fruit and effect of this belief, in a good converſation. And that faith here in the text, takes in a holy life, is evident from what follows, "whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of "their converſation;" from whence it is evident, that the apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch a faith, as ſhews forth itſelf in a good converſation.

So that we may very well ſuppoſe the apoſtle here to recommend the primitive faith to our imitation, in theſe four reſpects.

1. In regard of the ſincerity and purity of it.

2. In regard of the firmneſs and ſtability of it.

3. Of

3. Of their conſtancy and perſeverance in it. SERM. LXXVII.

4. Of the efficacy and fruitfulneſs of it, in a good converſation. All theſe may be collected from the expreſſions and circumſtances of the text.

1. We are to imitate theſe primitive patterns, in the ſincerity and purity of their faith; I mean, that the faith which we profeſs, be the ſincere doctrine of chriſtianity, and the pure word of GOD, free from all mixture of human additions and inventions, and not made up, as the faith of the Phariſees was among the Jews, and theirs of the church of Rome is at this day, of the word of GOD, and the doctrines and traditions of men; not like the creed of pope Pius IV. (which is now the ſtandard of the Roman faith) conſiſting of the 12 old articles of the chriſtian faith, delivered to us by CHRIST and his apoſtles, and as many new ones, coined and ſtampt by their later councils. This is not "to follow the "faith" of the apoſtles, and firſt patterns of chriſtianity, "the faith once delivered to the ſaints," as St. Jude calls it. This is to have our faith ſtand upon the authority of men, and not on the word of GOD; whereas we are "to follow the faith of the "firſt guides" of the chriſtian church, "who ſpake "unto them the word of GOD," as the apoſtle expreſly chargeth here in the text.

2. We are to imitate them, in the ſtability and firmneſs of our faith, and not ſuffer ourſelves to be ſhaken, and removed from it, by every wind of new doctrine; the faith of CHRIST being unchangeable, as CHRIST himſelf. And that by following the faith of the primitive guides and teachers of chriſtianity, the apoſtle here means, that we ſhould "be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable" in it, is plain from what follows immediately after the text; "whoſe

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" faith follow, conſidering the end of their conver-
" ſation. JESUS CHRIST, the ſame yeſterday, and
" to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with
" divers and ſtrange doctrines: for it is a good
" thing, that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace,"
that is, in the doctrine of the goſpel, which is fre-
quently called " the grace of GOD."

3. We are to imitate them, in the conſtancy and perſeverance of their faith; and that, notwithſtanding all the diſcountenance and oppoſition, the perſecution and ſuffering which attend the profeſſion of this faith; which the apoſtle ſufficiently intimates in this epiſtle, to have been the condition of thoſe Chriſtians, to whom he wrote; and therefore he propoſeth ſo many examples to them, of conſtant and patient ſuffering for GOD and his truth; and it is probable enough, that the apoſtle here recommends the example of thoſe, who were the primitive martyrs, as well as teachers of chriſtianity. He had before propoſed to them the living examples of thoſe, who were under actual perſecutions and ſufferings for the goſpel, ver. 3. " remember thoſe that are in
" bonds, and thoſe that ſuffer adverſity," and here in the 7th verſe he ſeems to propoſe the pattern of thoſe, who had laid down their lives and died for the faith; " remember thoſe who have been your guides,
" and have ſpoken to you the word of GOD, whoſe
" faith follow, conſidering the end of their conver-
" ſation," τὴν ἔκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς, which may be
" rendered, the laſt act of their lives, the manner of their going out of the world, perhaps by martyrdom; as if he had ſaid, imitate them in their conſtancy and perſeverance in the faith, even to the laſt, in laying down their lives for it. And thus we ſhould be ready to do, if GOD calls us to it. However, it is certain

tain the apoſtle meant their conſtancy and perſeve- SERM.
rance in the faith, to the laſt, and their dying in, if LXXVII.
not for the faith of CHRIST. And this is neceſſary, if we expect the crown of life, and hope for the ſame happy end, which they had; for none but "they "that continue to the end, ſhall be ſaved."

4. We ſhould imitate them, in the efficacy and fruitfulneſs of their faith, in the practice and virtues of a good life. "Whoſe faith follow, conſidering "the end of their converſation," that is, their perſeverance in a holy courſe to the end. And theſe muſt never be ſeparated; a ſound faith, and a good life. Without this, our faith is barren and dead, as St. James tells us, ch. ii. ver. 17. Our knowledge and belief of the chriſtian doctrine, muſt manifeſt itſelf in a good converſation. "Who is a wiſe "man," (ſays the ſame St. James, ch. iii. ver. "13.) who is a wiſe man, and endowed with know-"ledge amongſt you? Let him ſhew out of a good "converſation his works." "This is a faithful "ſaying," ſaith St. Paul to Titus, ch. iii. 8. "And "theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, "that they who have believed in GOD, be careful "to maintain good works."

And herein the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR were eminent examples. They lived as they taught, and practiſed the doctrine which they preached. So St. Paul ſtrictly chargeth Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 12. "Be thou an example of the believers, in "word, in converſation, in charity, in faith, in pu-"rity." And our SAVIOUR tells us, that hereby chiefly falſe prophets and teachers might be known from the true apoſtles of CHRIST, Matth. vii. 20. "By their fruits ye ſhall know them." And indeed we do not follow the faith of thoſe excellent perſons,

if

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if we do not "abound in all the fruits of righteouſ-
"neſs, which, by JESUS CHRIST, are to the praiſe
"and glory of GOD." I come now to the

Third and laſt thing I propoſed, viz. the encouragement to this, from the conſideration of the happy ſtate of thoſe perſons, who are propoſed to us for patterns, and the glorious reward which they are made partakers of in another world. Conſidering the end of their converſation τὴν ἔκβασιν, their egreſs or departure out of this life, into a bleſſed and glorious ſtate, where they have received the crown and reward of their faith and patience, and pious converſation in this world; or elſe (which comes much to one,) conſidering the concluſion of their lives, with what patience and comfort they left the world, and with what joyful aſſurance of the happy condition they were going to, and were to continue in for ever.

And this is a great encouragement to conſtancy and perſeverance in faith and holineſs, to ſee with what chearfulneſs and comfort good men die, and with what a firm and ſteady perſuaſion of the happineſs they are entring upon. For who would not be glad to leave the world, in that calmneſs and ſerenity of mind, and comfortable aſſurance of a bleſſed eternity? Bad men wiſh this, and are ready to ſay with Balaam, "let me die the death of the righteous, "and let my laſt end be like his." But if we would have the comfort of ſuch a death, we muſt live ſuch lives, and imitate the faith and good converſation of thoſe whom we deſire to reſemble in the manner of their death, and to go into the ſame happy ſtate that they are in after death. If we do not make their lives our pattern; we muſt not expect to be conformable to them, in the happy manner of their death.

When

When we hear of the death of an eminently good man, we do not doubt but he is happy; and are confident, that he will meet with a reward of his piety and goodneſs in another world. If we believe this of him, let us endeavour to be like him; that we may attain the ſame happineſs, which we believe him to be poſſeſſed of, and, as the apoſtle exhorts, chap. vi. 12. "let us not be ſlothful; but followers "of them, who through faith and patience inherit "the promiſes." Let us ſhew the ſame diligence that they did; that we may have the ſame full aſſurance of hope unto the end, which they had. SERM. LXXVII.

The inference from this diſcourſe, which I have made upon this argument, is, to ſhew what uſe we ought to make of theſe excellent examples, which are ſet before us, of the firſt founders and teachers of our religion, and what is the proper honour and reſpect, which we ought to pay to their memory: not invocation and adoration; but a zealous imitation of their faith, and good converſation. The greateſt honour we can do them, the moſt acceptable to GOD, the moſt grateful to them, and the moſt beneficial to ourſelves, is to endeavour to be like them: not to make any images, and likeneſs of them, to fall down before them, and worſhip them; but to form the image of their faith and virtues upon our hearts and lives: not to pray to them; but to praiſe GOD for ſuch bright and glorious examples, and to endeavour with all our might to imitate their faith, and patience, and piety, and humility, and meekneſs, and charity, and all thoſe other virtues which were ſo reſplendent in them. And this is to remember the founders of our religion as we ought, "to follow their faith," and "to conſider the end of their converſation."

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Had the chriſtian religion required, or intended any ſuch thing, as of latter times hath been practiſed in the world; it had been as eaſy for the apoſtle to have ſaid, remember them that have been your guides, and have ſpoken to you the word of God, to erect images to them, and to worſhip them with due veneration, and to pray to them and make uſe of their interceſſion. But no ſuch thing is ſaid, or the leaſt intimation given of it, either in this text, or any other in the whole bible; but very much to the contrary.

Their example indeed is frequently recommended to us, for our imitation and encouragement; and for this reaſon, the providence of God hath taken particular care, that the memory of the apoſtles, and ſo many primitive Chriſtians and martyrs, ſhould be tranſmitted to poſterity; that Chriſtians in all ſucceeding ages might propound theſe patterns to themſelves, and have perpetually before their eyes the piety and virtue of their lives, and their patient and conſtant ſufferings for the truth; that when God ſhall pleaſe to call us to the like trial, "we may "not be wearied and faint in our minds; but being "compaſſed about with ſuch a cloud of witneſſes," having ſo many examples in our eye of thoſe, "who "through faith and patience inherit the promiſes," and do now as it were look down from their happy ſtate upon us here below, who are combating with manifold temptations, to ſee how we behave and acquit ourſelves in our chriſtian courſe, we may take encouragement to ourſelves, from ſuch examples, and ſuch ſpectators, to "run with patience the race "which is ſet before us."

I know indeed that other uſe than this hath been, and is at this day made of the memory of the ſaints and

and martyrs of former ages, very diſhonourable to God, and very grievous to them, if they be ſenſible of what is done here below; I mean to worſhip them, and to pray to them, and (to the great diſparagement of the powerful interceſſion of "our great "high prieſt, JESUS the Son of GOD") to make them the mediators and interceſſors in heaven with GOD for us. Of this the ſcripture hath no where given us the leaſt intimation; but hath expreſly commanded the contrary, "to worſhip the LORD "our GOD, and him only to ſerve; and to pray to "him alone, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, who is "the only mediator betwixt GOD and man." Nor are there any footſteps of any ſuch practice, in the primitive church, for the firſt three hundred years; as is acknowledged by our moſt learned adverſaries of the church of Rome. SERM. LXXVII.

The ſcripture no where propounds the ſaints to us, for objects of our worſhip; but for the patterns of our lives. This is the greateſt reſpect and veneration, that we can, or ought to pay to them; and whatever is beyond this, is a voluntary humility, injurious to GOD and our bleſſed SAVIOUR, and moſt certainly diſpleaſing to thoſe, whom we pretend to honour; if they know how men play the fool about them here below.

Let us then endeavour to be like them, in the holy and virtuous actions of their lives, in their conſtant patience and ſuffering for the truth; if GOD ſhall call us thereto. And we may be like them, if we do but ſincerely endeavour it, and pray to GOD for his grace and aſſiſtance to that end. For theſe examples were not left for our admiration only; but for our imitation. We frequently read the lives of the apoſtles and firſt founders of our

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religion: but I know not how it comes to paſs, we chooſe rather lazily to admire them, than vigorouſly to follow them; as if the piety of the firſt Chriſtians were miraculous, and not at all intended for the imitation of ſucceeding ages; as if heaven and earth, GOD and men, and all things were alter'd, ſince that time; as if chriſtianity were then in its youthful age and vigour, but is ſince decayed, and grown old, and hath quite loſt its power and virtue. And indeed the generality of Chriſtians live at ſuch a faint and careleſs rate, as to make the world believe, that either all the ſtories of the primitive Chriſtians are fables; or elſe, that the force of chriſtianity is ſtrangely abated, and that the holy Spirit of GOD hath forſaken the earth, and is retired to the Father. But truth never grows old, and thoſe laws of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, which are contained in the goſpel, are ſtill as reaſonable, and apt to gain upon the minds of men, as ever. GOD is the ſame he was, and our bleſſed SAVIOUR is ſtill at the right hand of GOD, interceding powerfully for ſinners, for "mercy and grace to help in time "of need." The promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel are ſtill as true and powerful as ever; and the holy Spirit of GOD is ſtill in the world, and effectually works in them that believe.

Let us not then deceive ourſelves in this matter. The primitive Chriſtians were "men like ourſelves, "ſubject to the ſame paſſions that we are, and com-"paſſed about with the ſame infirmities;" ſo that although that extraordinary ſpirit and power of miracles, which GOD endowed them withal, for the firſt planting and propagating of the goſpel in the world, be now ceaſed; yet the ſanctifying power and virtue of GOD's holy Spirit, does ſtill accom-

pany

pany the goſpel, and is ready to aſſiſt us in every good work. SERM. LXXVII.

In a word, we have all that is neceſſary to work the ſame graces and virtues in us, which were in them; and if we be not ſlothful, and wanting to ourſelves, we may "follow their faith," and at laſt "attain the end of it, even the ſalvation of our "ſouls."

Let us then, from an idle admiring of thoſe excellent patterns, proceed to a vigorous imitation of them, and be ſo far from being diſcouraged by the excellency of them, as to make even that matter and ground of encouragement to ourſelves; according to that of Tertullian, *admonetur omnis ætas fieri poſſe, quod aliquando factum eſt*; "all ages to the end "of the world may be convinced, that what hath "been done, is poſſible to be done." There have been ſuch holy and excellent perſons in the world; and therefore it is poſſible for men to be ſuch.

"Let us not then be ſlothful, but followers of "them, who through faith and patience inherit the "promiſes. Since we are compaſſed about with "ſuch a cloud of witneſſes; let us lay aſide every "weight, and the ſin which ſo eaſily beſets us, and "let us run with patience the race which is ſet "before us, looking unto JESUS the author and "finiſher of our faith, who for the joy that was ſet "before him, endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the "ſhame, and is now ſet down at the right hand of "GOD."

Preached on All-ſaints day.

SERMON LXXVIII.

The encouragement to ſuffer for CHRIST; and the danger of denying him.

2 TIM. II. 11, 12.

It is a faithful ſaying; for if we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him: if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him: if we deny him, he alſo will deny us.

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IN the beginning of this chapter, St. Paul encourageth Timothy to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of the goſpel, notwithſtanding the ſufferings which attended it; ver. 1. "Thou therefore "my ſon, be ſtrong in the grace which is in CHRIST "JESUS;" and ver. 3. "Thou therefore endure "hardſhip, as a good ſoldier of JESUS CHRIST." And to animate him in his reſolution, he quotes a ſaying, which it ſeems was well known and firmly believed among Chriſtians; a ſaying on the one hand full of encouragement to thoſe who with patience and conſtancy ſuffered for their religion; and on the other hand, full of terror to thoſe who for fear of ſuffering denied it.

"It is a faithful ſaying." This is a preface uſed by this apoſtle, to introduce ſome remarkable ſentence, of more than ordinary weight and concernment; 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, and wor-"thy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came

" into the world to ſave ſinners;" and chap. iv. 8, 9. " Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having a " promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which " is to come. This is a faithful ſaying, and wor- " thy of all acceptation." Titus. iii. 8. " This is " a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou " affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed " in GOD, might be careful to maintain good works." And here in the text, the ſame preface is uſed to ſignify the importance of the ſaying he was about to mention; " it is a faithful ſaying; if we be dead " with him, we ſhall alſo live with him: if we ſuf- " fer, we ſhall alſo reign with him: if we deny him, " he alſo will deny us." SERM. LXXVIII.

The firſt two ſentences are matter of encouragement to thoſe who ſuffer with CHRIST, and for him, and are the very ſame in ſenſe. " If we be dead with " him," that is, if we lay down our lives for the teſtimony of the truth, as he did, " we ſhall alſo live with him," that is, we ſhall in like manner be made partakers of immortality, as he is: " if we ſuffer" or endure as he did, " we ſhall alſo reign with him" in glory.

The other ſentence is matter of terror to thoſe who deny him and his truth. " If we deny him, he alſo " will deny us;" to which is ſubjoined another ſaying much to the ſame ſenſe; " if we believe not," εἰ ἀπιςοῦμεν, if we be unfaithful; " yet he remaineth " faithful, he cannot deny himſelf;" that is, he will be as good as his word, and make good that ſolemn threatning which he hath denounced againſt thoſe, who ſhall for fear of ſuffering deny him, and his truth.

The words being thus explained, I ſhall begin with the firſt part of this remarkable ſaying; " if we " be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him: if

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" we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him." This, it ſeems, was a noted ſaying among Chriſtians; and whether they had it by tradition of our SAVIOUR, or whether it was in familiar uſe among the apoſtles, as a very proper and powerful argument to keep Chriſtians ſtedfaſt to their religion, I cannot determine. It is certain, that ſayings to this ſenſe are very frequent, eſpecially in the epiſtles of St. Paul, Rom. vi. 5. " For if we have been planted together " in the likeneſs of his death; we ſhall be alſo in " the likeneſs of his reſurrection." And verſe 8. " Now if we be dead with CHRIST; we believe " that we ſhall alſo live with him." 2 Cor. iv. 10. " Always bearing about in the body, the dying of " our LORD JESUS; that the life alſo of JESUS " might be made manifeſt in our body." And verſe 11. " For we which live, are always delivered unto " death for JESUS ſake; that the life alſo of JESUS " might be made manifeſt in our mortal fleſh." And Rom. viii. 17. " If ſo be that we ſuffer with " him, that we may be alſo glorified together." Phil. iii. 10, 11. " That I may know him, and the " power of his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his " ſufferings, being made conformable unto his death: " if by any means I might attain unto the reſurrec- " tion of the dead. 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. " Beloved, " think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial, " which is to try you, as though ſome ſtrange thing " happened unto you; but rejoice, inaſmuch as ye " are partakers of CHRIST's ſufferings; that when " his glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo " with exceeding joy."

You ſee that the ſenſe of this ſaying was in frequent uſe among the apoſtles, as a powerful argument to encourage Chriſtians to conſtancy in their religion,

religion, notwithſtanding the dangers and ſufferings which attended it. "This is a faithful ſaying: if "we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him: "if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him." SERM. LXXVIII.

And the force of this argument will beſt appear; by taking into conſideration theſe two things;

I. What virtue there is in a firm belief and perſuaſion of a bleſſed immortality in another world, to ſupport and bear up mens ſpirits under the greateſt ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake; and even to animate them, if GOD ſhall call them to it, to lay down their lives for their religion.

II. How it may be made out to be reaſonable, for men to embrace and voluntarily to ſubmit to preſent and grievous ſufferings, in hopes of a future happineſs and reward; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having, the ſame degree of certainty and aſſurance which we have of the evils and ſufferings of this preſent life.

I. What virtue there is in a firm belief and perſuaſion of a bleſſed immortality in another world, to ſupport and bear up mens ſpirits, under the greateſt ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake: and even to animate them, if GOD ſhall call them to it, to lay down their lives for their religion.

If men do firmly believe that they ſhall change this temporal and miſerable life for an endleſs ſtate of happineſs and glory, and that they ſhall meet with a reward of their ſufferings infinitely beyond the proportion of them, both in the weight and duration of it; this muſt needs turn the ſcales on that ſide, on which there is the greateſt weight: and there is a ſufficient ground for a firm belief of this. For if any thing can certainly be concluded from the providence of GOD, this may, that good men ſhall be happy

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happy one time or other: and becauſe they are very often great ſufferers in this life; that there is another ſtate remains for them after this life, wherein they ſhall meet with a full reward of all their ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake.

But beſides the reaſonableneſs of this, from the conſideration of GOD's providence, we have now a clear and expreſs reveſation of it; "life and im- "mortality being brought to light by the goſpel." This St. John tells us is the great promiſe of the goſpel, 1 John ii. 25. "This is the promiſe which he "hath promiſed us; even eternal life." And this promiſe, our SAVIOUR moſt expreſly makes to thoſe who ſuffer for him, Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. "Bleſſed "are they which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs "ſake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Bleſſed "are ye, when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute "you, and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſly "for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for "great is your reward in heaven." Mark x. 29, 30. "Verily I ſay unto you, there is no man that hath "left houſe, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or "mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my "ſake and the goſpel's; but he ſhall receive an "hundred fold now in this time, with perſecutions," (that is, ſo far as a ſtate of perſecution would admit) "and in the world to come eternal life."

And if ſuch a perſuaſion be firmly fixed in our minds; the faith of another world, and the aſſured hope of eternal life and happineſs, muſt needs have a mighty force and efficacy upon the minds of ſober and conſiderate men; becauſe there is no proportion between ſuffering for a little while, and being unſpeakably and eternally happy. So St. Paul tells us he calculated the matter, Rom. viii. 18. "I reckon

"(ſays

" (ſays he) that the ſufferings of this preſent time, SERM. LXXVIII.
" are not worthy to be compared with the glory
" which ſhall be revealed in us." The vaſt diſpro-portion between rhe ſufferings of a few days, and the joys and glory of eternity, when it is once firmly believed by us, will weigh down all the evils and calamities of this world, and give us courage and conſtancy under them. For why ſhould we faint; if we believe, that " our light affliction, which is but " for a moment, will work for us a far more ex-" ceeding and eternal weight of glory?" As the ſame St. Paul aſſures us, 2 Cor. iv. 17. If our minds be but thoroughly poſſeſſed with the hopes of a reſurrection to a better and happier life; this will make death, attended even with extremity of terror, to be tolerable; as we read of ſome, in that long catalogue of ſaints and martyrs, Heb. xi. 35. " Others " were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that " they might obtain a better reſurrection." It would make a man to rejoice in the ruin and diſſolution of this earthly tabernacle, to be aſſured, that when it " is diſſolved, we ſhall have a building of GOD, a " houſe not made with hands, eternal in the hea-" vens," as the ſame apoſtle aſſures us, 2 Cor. v. 1. Thus you ſee what virtue there is in the firm belief and perſuaſion of a better life, to bear up mens ſpirits under thoſe ſufferings and torments which may ſeem unſupportable to human nature.

And ſo indeed they would be, without an extraordinary grace and aſſiſtance of GOD to enable them to bear thoſe ſufferings, which his providence permits them to be exerciſed withal. But of this extraordinary grace, we are aſſured, not only from the conſideration of the attributes and providence of GOD; but likewiſe from the expreſs promiſes and declarations of his word. The

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The attributes of GOD and his providence give us good ground to believe that he who loves goodneſs and righteouſneſs, and hath a peculiar favour and regard for good men, will never ſuffer his faithful friends and ſervants to be brought into that diſtreſs for righteouſneſs ſake, that they ſhall not be able to endure thoſe evils and afflictions which befal them upon that account: and if in the courſe of his providence, any thing happen to them that is above the ordinary conſtancy and patience of human nature to bear, that in ſuch a caſe, GOD will extraordinarily interpoſe, and give them ſtrength and patience, ſupport and comfort, proportionable to the evils and ſufferings that are upon them; and that he will either lighten their burden, or add to their ſtrength; he will either mitigate their pain, or increaſe their patience; either he will check and reſtrain the effect of natural cauſes, as in the caſe of the three children, that were in the fiery furnace; and of Daniel, who was caſt into the den of lions; or elſe, (which comes to the ſame iſſue) if he will ſuffer cauſes to have their natural courſe, he will afford ſupernatural comforts to balance the fury and extremity of them. This is very credible, from the mere conſideration of GOD's goodneſs, and of the particular care and favour of his providence towards good men.

But beſides this, we have the expreſs promiſe and declaration of GOD's word, to this purpoſe, which puts us out of all doubt concerning that which we had good reaſon to hope and expect before, 1 Cor. x. 13. St. Paul there tells the Chriſtians at Corinth, that though they had met with ſome troubles, yet they had not been tried with the extremity of ſuffering: but when that ſhould happen, they had no

cauſe

cauſe to doubt, but GOD would enable them to bear it. "There hath no temptation taken you, but ſuch "as is common to man;" that is, you have not yet been exerciſed with any trial, but what is human; what the ordinary ſtrength and reſolution of human nature is able to bear: but in caſe it ſhould come to extreme ſuffering, and that they muſt either comply with the heathen idolatry, or endure extremity of torments; they had the promiſe of GOD's help to ſupport them in that caſe, "GOD is faithful, ſays he, "who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above "that you are able; but will with the tempta- "tion alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be "able to bear it;" and then it follows, "where- "fore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry;" that is, let no ſuffering that you are tempted withal, make you guilty of this ſin. And 1 Pet. iv. 14. the preſence of GOD's Spirit, in a very glorious manner, for our ſupport and comfort, is promiſed to thoſe who ſuffer for him. "If ye be reproached for the "name of CHRIST, happy are ye; for the Spirit of "glory and of GOD reſteth upon you." SERM. LXXVIII.

And this conſideration of GOD's ſtrength to ſupport us under ſufferings, makes the other, of the reward of them, a perfect and complete encouragement; which it could not be without it. For if, upon the whole matter, the preſent ſufferings of good men were intolerable, and human nature were not divinely aſſiſted to bear them: how great ſoever the future reward promiſed to them ſhould be; they that lay under them would be forced to conſult their own preſent eaſe and deliverance. I proceed to the

II. Thing I propoſed to conſider, namely, how it may be made out to be reaſonable to embrace and voluntarily to ſubmit to preſent and grievous ſuffer-

ings,

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ings, in hopes of future happineſs and reward; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having the ſame degree of certainty and aſſurance, which we have of the evils and ſufferings of this preſent life.

Now, granting that we have not the ſame degree of certainty concerning our future happineſs, that we have of our preſent ſufferings which we feel, or ſee juſt ready to come upon us; yet prudence making it neceſſary for men to run this hazard, does juſtify the reaſonableneſs of it. This I take to be a known and ruled caſe in the common affairs of life, and in matters of temporal concernment; and men act upon this principle every day. The huſbandman parts with his corn, and caſts it into the earth, in confidence that it will ſpring up again, and at the time of harveſt bring him a conſiderable return and advantage. He parts with a certainty, in hope only of a great future benefit: and though he have no demonſtration, for the infallible ſucceſs of his labour and hazard; yet he acts very reaſonably: becauſe if he does not take this courſe, he runs a greater and more certain hazard, of periſhing by famine at laſt, when his preſent ſtock is ſpent. The caſe of the merchant is the ſame, who parts with a preſent eſtate, in hopes of a future improvement; which yet is not ſo certain, as what he parts withal.

And if this be reaſonable in theſe caſes; then the hazard which men run, upon much greater aſſurance than either the huſbandman or the merchant hath, is much more reaſonable. When we part with this life in hopes of one infinitely better; that is, "in ſure "and certain hope of a reſurrection to eternal life:" and when we ſubmit to preſent ſufferings, to avoid an eternity of miſery, which is much more to be dreaded

dreaded than temporal want, this is reaſonable; be- SERM. LXXVIII.
cauſe here is a much greater advantage in view, and a more preſſing neceſſity in the caſe; nothing being ſo deſirable to one that muſt live for ever, as to be happy for ever; and nothing to be avoided by him with ſo much care, as everlaſting miſery and ruin. And for our ſecurity of obtaining the one, and eſcaping the other, we have "the promiſe of GOD, who "cannot lie;" which is all the certainty and ſecurity that things future and inviſible are capable of.

Nay, I will go lower. If GOD had made no expreſs promiſe and declaration of a future happineſs and reward, to thoſe that ſerve him and ſuffer for him: yet if any man out of a ſincere love to GOD, and awful regard to his laws, endure trouble and affliction, if there be a GOD and providence this is aſſurance enough to us, that our ſervices and ſufferings ſhall one time or other be conſidered and rewarded. For as ſure as any man is, that there is a GOD, and that his providence regards the actions of men; ſo ſure are we, that no man ſhall finally be a loſer by any thing that he doth or ſuffers for him.

So that the matter is now brought to this plain iſſue, that if it be reaſonable to believe there is a GOD, and that his providence regards and conſiders the actions of men; it is alſo reaſonable to endure preſent ſufferings, in hope of a future reward; and there is certainly enough in this caſe, to govern and determine a prudent man, that is in any good meaſure perſuaded of another life after this, and hath any tolerable conſideration of, and regard to his eternal intereſt.

Indeed, if we were ſure, that there were no life after this; if we had no expectation of a happineſs or miſery beyond this world; the wiſeſt thing that any

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any man could do, would be to enjoy as much of the preſent contentments and ſatisfactions of this world, as he could fairly come at. For "if there be no "reſurrection to another life;" the apoſtle allows the reaſoning of the epicure to be very good, "let "us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But on the other hand, if it be true that we are deſigned for immortality, and that another ſtate remains for us after this life, wherein we ſhall be unſpeakably happy, or intolerably and eternally miſerable, according as we have behaved ourſelves in this world; it is then evidently reaſonable, that men ſhould take the greateſt care of the longeſt duration, and be content to bear, and diſpenſe with ſome preſent trouble and inconvenience, for a felicity that will have no end; and be willing to labour and take pains, and deny our preſent eaſe and comfort for a little while, that we may be happy for ever. This is reckoned prudence in the account of this world, for a man to part with a preſent poſſeſſion and enjoyment, for a much greater advantage in reverſion: but ſurely the diſproportion between time and eternity is ſo vaſt, that did men but firmly believe that they ſhall live for ever, nothing in this world could reaſonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to ſuffer, for the obtaining of a bleſſed immortality.

In the virtue of this belief and perſuaſion, the primitive Chriſtians were fortified, againſt all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do againſt them; and they thought they made a very wiſe bargain, if "through many tribulations they might" at laſt "enter into the kingdom of GOD;" becauſe they believed, that the joys of heaven would abundantly recompenſe all their ſorrows and ſufferings upon earth. And ſo confident were they of this,

that

that they looked upon it as a ſpecial favour and re- SERM.
gard of GOD to them, to call them to ſuffer for his LXXVIII.
name. So St. Paul ſpeaks of it, Phil. i. 29. "Unto "you it is given, on the behalf of CHRIST, not "only to believe on him, but alſo to ſuffer for his "ſake." Yea, they accounted them happy, who upon this account were miſerable in this world. So St. James expreſly pronounceth of them, Jam. i. 12. "Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation;" (meaning the temptation of perſecution and ſuffering) "for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the "crown of life, which the LORD hath promiſed to "them that love him." And this conſideration was that which kept up their ſpirits, from ſinking under the weight of their greateſt ſufferings. So St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. iv. 14, 16. "Knowing that "he which raiſed up the LORD JESUS, ſhall raiſe "up us alſo by JESUS. For which cauſe we faint "not; but though our outward man periſh, yet "the inward man is renewed day by day." The ſufferings of their bodies did but help to raiſe and fortify their ſpirits: nay, ſo far were they from fainting under thoſe afflictions, that they rejoiced and gloried in them. So the ſame apoſtle tells us, Rom. v. 2, 3. that in the midſt of their ſufferings, "they "rejoiced in hope of the glory of GOD; and that "they gloried in tribulations" as being the way to be made partakers of that glory: and Heb. x. 34. that "they took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods; "knowing in themſelves, that they had in heaven a "better and an enduring ſubſtance." And for this reaſon, St. James, chap. i. 2. exhorts Chriſtians "to account it all joy, when they fall into divers "temptations;" (that is, various kinds of ſuffer-

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ings) becauſe of the manifold advantages which from thence would redound to them.

Now what was it that inſpired them to all this courage and chearfulneſs, but the belief of a mighty reward, far beyond the proportion of all their ſufferings, and a firm perſuaſion that they ſhould be vaſt gainers by them at the laſt? This conſideration St. Paul urgeth with great force, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal "weight of glory: whilſt we look not at the things "which are ſeen; but at the things which are not "ſeen: for the things which are ſeen, are tem-"poral; but the things which are not ſeen, are "eternal." If we would compare things juſtly, and attentively regard and conſider the inviſible glories of another world, as well as the things which are ſeen; we ſhould eaſily perceive, that he who ſuffers for GOD and religion, does not renounce happineſs; but puts it out to intereſt, upon terms of the greateſt advantage.

I ſhall now ſpeak briefly to the

Second part of this remarkable ſaying in the text; "if we deny him, he alſo will deny us:" to which is ſubjoined in the words following, "if we believe "not; εἰ ἀπιςοῦμεν, if we deal unfaithfully with him; "yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himſelf; that is, he will be conſtant to his word, and make good that ſolemn threatning which he hath denounced againſt thoſe, who for fear of ſuffering ſhall deny him and his truth before men, Matt. x. 33. "Whoſoever (ſaith our LORD there) ſhall deny me "before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father "which is in heaven." Mark viii. 38. "Who-"ſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of "my

"my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, "of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when "he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the "holy angels." This is a terrible threatning, "to "be diſowned by CHRIST at the day of judgment, "in the preſence of GOD and his holy angels;" and this threatning will certainly be made good; and though we may renounce him, "and break our faith "with him; yet he remains faithful," who hath threatned, and "cannot deny himſelf."

This is matter of great terror, and ſeriouſly to be thought upon by thoſe who are tempted to deny CHRIST and his truth, either by the hope of worldly advantage, or the fear of temporal ſufferings. What worldly advantage can we propoſe to ourſelves, by quitting our religion, which can be thought an equal price, for the loſs of our immortal ſouls, and of the happineſs of all eternity? Suppoſe the whole world were offered us in conſideration; yet "what is a "man profited; if he ſhould gain the whole world, "and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give "in exchange for his ſoul?" As our SAVIOUR reaſons, Matt. xvi. 26.

And on the other hand, if the fear of temporal ſufferings be ſuch a terror to men, as to ſhake their conſtancy in religion, and to tempt them to renounce it; the fear of eternal torments ought to be much more powerful, to keep them ſtedfaſt to their religion, and to deter them from the denial of it. If fear will move us; then in all reaſon, that which is moſt terrible ought to prevail moſt with us, and the greateſt danger ſhould be moſt dreaded by us, according to our SAVIOUR's moſt friendly and reaſonable advice, Luke xii. 4, 5. "I ſay unto you, my friends, "be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after

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" that have no more that they can do. But I will " forewarn you whom you ſhall fear. Fear him, " who after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into " hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." If there can be no doubt, which of them is moſt to be dreaded; there can be no doubt what we are to do, in caſe of ſuch a temptation.

I ſhall now draw ſome inferences from this diſcourſe by way of application.

Firſt, If " this be a faithful ſaying, that if we be " dead with CHRIST, we ſhall alſo live with him; " if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him; but if " we deny him, he will alſo deny us;" the belief of it ought to have a mighty influence upon us, to make us ſtedfaſt and immoveable in the profeſſion and practice of our holy religion. This inference the apoſtle makes from the doctrine of a bleſſed reſurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. " therefore, my beloved bre- " thren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abound- " ing in the work of the LORD; foraſmuch as ye " know, that your labour is not in vain in the " LORD." If any thing will fix men in the profeſſion of their religion, and make them ſerious in the practice of it; the belief of a glorious reſurrection, and of the reward which GOD will then give to his faithful ſervants, muſt needs have a very powerful influence upon them to this purpoſe. Upon the ſame ground the apoſtle to the Hebrews exhorts them " to hold faſt the profeſſion of their faith, without " wavering; becauſe he is faithful that hath pro- " miſed." If we be conſtant in the profeſſion and practice of our holy religion; GOD will be faithful to the promiſe which he hath made of eternal life, " to " thoſe who by patient continuance in well-doing, " ſeek for glory and honour and immortality."

If

If under the dark and imperfect diſpenſation of the law, good men ſhewed ſo much courage and conſtancy for GOD and religion, as we read in that long catalogue of heroes, Heb. xi. How much more ſhould Chriſtians, whoſe faith is ſupported much more ſtrongly than theirs was, by a much clearer evidence of another life, and a bleſſed immortality, than they had; by more expreſs promiſes of divine comfort and aſſiſtance under ſufferings, than were made to them; and by the moſt divine and encouraging example, of the greateſt patience under the greateſt ſufferings, that the world ever had, in the death and paſſion of the Son of GOD, "who for the joy that "was ſet before him, endured the croſs, and de-"ſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand "of the throne of GOD!" When we conſider this glorious example of ſuffering, and the glorious reward of it; how can we "be weary and faint in our "minds!" If the ſaints and apoſtles of the old teſtament did ſuch great things, by virtue of a faith, which relied chiefly upon the attributes and providence of GOD; what ſhould not we do, who have the ſecurity of GOD's expreſs promiſe for our comfort and encouragement! We certainly have much greater reaſon to take up our croſs more chearfully, and to bear it more patiently, than they did. SERM. LXXVIII.

Secondly, We ſhould always be prepared in the reſolutions of our minds, to ſuffer for the teſtimony of GOD's truth and a good conſcience, if it ſhould pleaſe GOD at any time to call us to it. This our SAVIOUR hath made a neceſſary condition of his religion, and a qualification of a true diſciple. "If any man will "be my diſciple; let him take up his croſs and fol-"low me." So that we are to reckon upon it, and to prepare for it; that if it comes, we may not be

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ſurprized, "as if ſome ſtrange thing had happened "to us;" and may not be unreſolved what to do in ſuch a caſe. And GOD knows when we may be called to it: however it is wiſe, to forecaſt it in our minds, and to be always in a preparation and readineſs to entertain the worſt that may happen; that if it come, we may "be able to ſtand out in an evil "day;" and if it does not come, GOD will accept the reſolution of our minds, and reward it according to the ſincerity of it: he that knows what we would have done, will conſider it, as if we had done it.

Thirdly, The leſs we are called to ſuffer for GOD, the more we ſhould think ourſelves obliged to do for him; the leſs GOD is pleaſed to exerciſe our patience, we ſhould abound ſo much the more in the active virtues of a good life; and our obedience to GOD ſhould be ſo much the more chearful, and we more "fruitful in every good work." If there be no need of ſealing the truth with our blood; we ſhould be ſure to adorn and recommend it by our lives.

Fourthly and laſtly, if the hopes of immortality will bear men up under the extremity of ſuffering and torments, and give men courage and reſolution againſt all the terrors of the world; they ought much more to make us victorious over the temptations and allurements of it. For certainly it is in reaſon much eaſier to forego pleaſure, than to endure pain; to refuſe or lay down a good place, for the teſtimony of a good conſcience, than to lay down our lives upon that account. And in vain does any man pretend that he will be a martyr for his religion, when he will not rule an appetite, nor reſtrain a luſt, nor ſubdue a paſſion, nor croſs his covetouſneſs and ambition, for the ſake of it, "and in hope of that "eternal life, which GOD, that cannot lie, hath pro-

"miſed."

" miſed." He that refuſeth to do the leſs, is not like to do the greater. It is very improbable, that a man will die for his religion, when he cannot be perſuaded to live according to it. So that by this we may try the ſincerity of our reſolution concerning martyrdom. For what profeſſion ſoever men make, he that will not deny himſelf the pleaſures of ſin, and the advantages of this world, for CHRIST; when it comes to the puſh, will never have the heart " to take up his " croſs, and follow him." He that cannot take up a reſolution to live a ſaint, hath a demonſtration within himſelf, that he is never like to die a martyr.

SERMON LXXIX.

Preached on All ſaints day.

The bleſſedneſs of good men after death.

REV. XIV. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the LORD, *from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

I Will not trouble you with any nice diſpute about the author of this book of the Revelation, or the authority of it; though both theſe were ſometimes controverted; becauſe it is now many ages ſince this book was received into the canon of the

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ſcriptures, as of divine authority, and as written by St. John. Nor ſhall I at this time enquire into the particular meaning of the ſeveral viſions and predictions contained in it. It is confeſſedly, in ſeveral parts of it, a very obſcure book; and there needs no other argument to ſatisfy us that it is ſo, than that ſo many learned and inquiſitive perſons, have given ſuch different interpretations of ſeveral remarkable paſſages in it; as particularly concerning "the ſlaying of the "two witneſſes, and the number of the beaſt."

The words which I have read to you, though there be ſome difficulty about the interpretation of ſome particular expreſſions in them; yet in the general ſenſe and intendment of them, they are very plain, being a ſolemn declaration of the bleſſed ſtate of good men after this life.

And that we may take the more notice of them, they are brought in with a great deal of ſolemn preparation and addreſs, as it were on purpoſe to beſpeak our attention to them: "I heard a voice from "heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the "dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth." And for the greater confirmation of them, the ſpecial teſtimony of the Spirit is added to "the voice "from heaven," declaring the reaſon why they "that die in the LORD," are pronounced to be in ſo happy a condition: "Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that "they may reſt from their labours; and their works "do follow them."

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall firſt enquire into the particular ſenſe and meaning of them.

Secondly, Proſecute the general intendment of them, which I told you is to declare to us, the bleſſed ſtate of thoſe that die in the LORD, (that is) of ſaints and good men, after they are departed this life.

Firſt,

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First, I shall enquire into the particular sense and meaning of the words. To the clearing of which, nothing will conduce more, than to consider the occasion of them, which was briefly this. In the visions of this and the foregoing chapter, is represented to St. John, the great straits that the Christians, the true worshippers of the true God, should be reduced to. On the one hand, they are threatned with death; or if they be suffered to live, they are interdicted all commerce with human society, chap. xiii. 15. "And he had power to cause, that as many as "would not worship the image of the beast, should "be killed:" and verse 17. "that no man may buy "or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast." And on the other hand, they that do worship the beast are threatned with damnation, chap. xiv. 9, 10. "If any man do worship the beast, the same "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. So that whenever this should happen, it would be a time of great trial to the sincere Christians, being threatned with extreme persecution on the one hand, and eternal damnation on the other; and therefore it is added in the 12th verse, "here is the patience of "the saints: here are they that keep the command-"ments of God, and the faith of Jesus." This is represented in St. John's visions, at the last and extremest persecution of the true worshippers of God, and which should precede the final downfal of Babylon. And when this should happen, then he tells us, the patience of the saints would be tried to purpose, and then it would be seen, who are faithful to God, and constant to his truth; and upon this immediately follows the voice from heaven in the text; "and "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, "Write,

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" Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the LORD,
" from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they
" may reſt from their labours; and their works do
" follow them."

The main difficulty of the words, depends upon the word ἀπάρτι, from henceforth; which interpreters do variouſly refer to ſeveral parts of the text. Some by changing the accent, and reading it, ἅπαρτι, would change the ſignification of the word into *omninò*; *omninò beati ſunt*, they are altogether bleſſed, very happy, who die in the LORD. But this is altogether deſtitute of the countenance and warrant of any ancient copy. We will then ſuppoſe that the word is ἀπάρτι, and to be rendered as we tranſlate it, from henceforth, from this time. All the difficulty is, to what part of the text we are to refer it. Some refer it to the word bleſſed; " bleſſed from
" henceforth are the dead which die in the LORD:" As if from this time, and not before, the ſouls of good men were, immediately after death, admitted into heaven; which, many of the ancient fathers thought, the ſouls of good men who died before the coming of CHRIST, were not. But then this bleſſedneſs ought to have been dated, not from the time of St. John's viſion, but of CHRIST's aſcenſion; according to that of St. Ambroſe, in the hymn called *Te Deum*; " when thou hadſt overcome the ſharpneſs
" of death, thou didſt open the kingdom of heaven
" to all believers."

Others refer it to dying in the LORD; " bleſſed
" are the dead, that from henceforth die in the
" LORD." But this hath no peculiar emphaſis in it; becauſe they were " bleſſed, that died in the
" LORD," before that time.

Others refer it to the words following, concerning the teſtimony of the Spirit; "Yea, from hence-"forth, ſaith the Spirit." All theſe varieties agree in this ſenſe in general; that ſome ſpecial bleſſedneſs is promiſed and declared to thoſe who ſhould die after that time: but what that is in particular, is not eaſy to make out.

But the moſt plain and ſimple interpretation, and that which ſeems to be moſt ſuitable to the occaſion of theſe words, is this; that the word ἀπάρτι, from henceforth, is to be referred to the whole ſentence, thus; "from henceforth, bleſſed are the dead which "die in the LORD;" as if St. John had ſaid, conſidering the extremity and cruel circumſtances of this laſt and ſevere perſecution, we may from that time forward reckon thoſe, who are already dead, (ſuppoſing that they died in the LORD) to be very happy; in that they did not live to ſee and ſuffer thoſe things, which will then befal the faithful ſervants of GOD, when "the devil ſhall come, having great "wrath, becauſe he knoweth he hath but a ſhort "time." Much in the ſame ſenſe as Solomon, when he conſidered the oppreſſions that were done under the ſun, ſays, Eccl. iv. 2. that "he praiſed the dead, "which were already dead, more than the living, "which were yet alive;" that is, conſidering the oppreſſions, which were ſo frequent in the world, he reckoned thoſe happier that were out of it, than thoſe who ſtill lived in it.

And as this is very agreeable to the ſcope of what goes before, ſo it ſuits very well with what follows after, as the reaſon, why thoſe perſons are declared to be ſo happy; "Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they "may reſt from their labours: and their works "do follow them" that is, that they may be at

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SERM. IX. an end of their troubles and ſufferings; and may not be tried beyond their ſtrength and patience, under that terrible perſecution which will reign at that time; and likewiſe that they may receive the reward of all the good they have done, and the evils they have ſuffered in this world; in the very ſame ſenſe, that the righteous are ſaid to be taken away from the evil to come, Iſai. lvii. 1. 2. "The righteous is taken "away from the evil to come, he ſhall enter into "peace: they ſhall reſt in their beds, each one walk- "ing in his uprightneſs;" that is, enjoying the comfort of his integrity and ſincerity towards GOD.

And now the main difficulty being over, we ſhall need to trouble ourſelves the leſs about the other expreſſions in the text: yet there are two which I ſhall a little explain to you.

1. What is here meant by "dying in the LORD." And this ſort of phraſe, in the LORD, in CHRIST, and in the name of CHRIST, is uſed in ſcripture very variouſly. In general it ſignifies, the doing or ſuffering any thing, with relation to CHRIST, and upon his account; and ſo "to die in the LORD," doth moſt frequently ſignify, to die in the faith of CHRIST, and the profeſſion of the chriſtian religion. Sometimes it ſignifies to die for his cauſe, and to bear teſtimony to his truth, which is therefore called martyrdom, as St. Paul is ſaid to be δεσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ, Eph. iv. 1. "A priſoner in the LORD; that is, for his cauſe. So likewiſe, St. Peter; "If you be re- "proached ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, in the name of CHRIST; "happy are ye:" and it is probable, that the expreſſion, 1 Cor. xv. 18. "Then they alſo which are "fallen aſleep in CHRIST;" is to be underſtood, of thoſe that died for his cauſe; becauſe it follows immediately, "if in this life only we have hope in "CHRIST,

"CHRIST, we are of all men moſt miſerable;" SERM. LXXIX.
that is, conſidering how much Chriſtians ſuffered for him in this life, they were in a moſt miſerable condition, if there were nothing to be expected beyond it; but eſpecially, if we conſider the parallel phraſe, 1 Theſſ. iv. 14. "So them alſo that ſleep "in JESUS," διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, for JESUS ſake; that is, them that have ſuffered martyrdom for him, "will "GOD bring with him." And in this ſenſe, many underſtand the phraſe in the text, as ſpoken of martyrs; "bleſſed are the dead, which die in the "LORD;" that is, for his cauſe. And though I think the phraſe may well enough be underſtood more generally, yet I ſhall not reject this ſenſe: becauſe it is not unſuitable to the ſcope and occaſion of the words. For conſidering that laſt and extreme perſecution which he had deſcribed; it was not altogether improper to pronounce thoſe happy, that had ſuffered martyrdom already, and were taken away from thoſe dreadful calamities, which in theſe laſt days of antichriſt were to fall upon the faithful ſervants of CHRIST.

2. The other expreſſion is the laſt in the text, "and "their works do follow them." So we render the word ἀκολουθεῖ, which yet does moſt properly ſignify to accompany, or go along with one; and ſo indeed the expreſſion will rather be more emphatical, "they "reſt from their labours, and their works accom-"pany them." But whether the word be rendered, to follow, or, to accompany, the difference is not very material.

Thus you ſee what the particular ſenſe and meaning of the words probably is, to declare the happy eſtate of thoſe ſaints or martyrs, who were already dead, in and for the faith of CHRIST, and ſhould not

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not live to ſee thoſe cruel and fearful ſufferings, which ſhould afterwards come upon the Chriſtians. But then this is grounded upon that general truth, that "they are happy that die in the LORD." And this is that which I intend now to proſecute, abſtracting from the particular occaſion, upon which theſe words were ſpoken; which brings me to the

Second thing I propounded, and chiefly deſigned to handle upon the occaſion of this day; namely, the happy eſtate of good men after they have departed out of this life. And in ſpeaking to this, I ſhall confine myſelf to two particulars, which the text mentions, as the reaſons and grounds, why "they that die in the LORD," are declared to be in ſo bleſſed a condition; "Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that "they may reſt from their labours; and their works "do follow them."

1. Good men, when they are departed this life, are freed from all the labours and pains they were exerciſed with in this world: "that they may reſt "from their labours.

2. They reap the comfort and reward of all the good which they have done in this world: "and "their works do follow them," or rather, go along with them, to receive the reward which GOD hath promiſed to "them, who by patient continuance in "well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and im-"mortality."

1. Thoſe "who die in the LORD," are freed from the evils and miſeries of this life And this is ſo great a felicity, that ſome (and thoſe who think themſelves no ſmall philoſophers) have placed the chief happineſs of man in freedom from pain and trouble. But though happineſs do not conſiſt in this alone; yet it cannot be denied to be a great part of it: for

for though ſome have been ſo phantaſtically obſti- SERM. nate, as, againſt the reaſon and common ſenſe of LXXIX. mankind, to maintain this paradox, that a wiſe man may be as happy upon the rack, or in Phalaris his bull, as in the greateſt eaſe and freedom from pain that can be imagined; yet nature cries ſhame of this hypocriſy; and there are none of thoſe wiſe men they ſpeak of, were ever ſuch fools as to try the experiment, and to ſhew by their actions, that it was indifferent to them, whether they laid themſelves down upon their beds every night, or were ſtretched upon a rack; which yet ought to have been indifferent to them, had they believed themſelves, and really eſteemed that, which others account pain, to be as happy a condition, as that which is commonly called eaſe.

But we need not trouble ourſelves to confute ſo ſtupid a principle, which is confuted by nature, and by every man's ſenſe and experience. I think we may take it for granted, that freedom from miſery is a very conſiderable part of happineſs; otherwiſe heaven and hell, if we conſider only the torment of it, would be all one. But certainly it is no ſmall endearment of religion, to the common ſenſe of mankind, that it promiſeth to us in the next life, a freedom from all the evils and troubles of this. And by this the happineſs of heaven is frequently deſcribed to us in ſcripture, Iſai. lvii. 2. ſpeaking of the righteous man; "he ſhall enter into peace: they "ſhall reſt in their beds," 2 Theſſ. i. 7. where the apoſtle ſpeaking of the reward of thoſe, who ſhould ſuffer perſecution for religion. "It is a righteous "thing with GOD, (ſays he) to recompenſe to you, "who are troubled, reſt with us, when the LORD "JESUS ſhall be revealed from heaven with his "mighty

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" mighty angels." And the apoſtle to the Hebrews frequently deſcribes the happineſs of Chriſtians by " entering into reſt." And Rev. xxi. 4. the ſtate of the new Jeruſalem is ſet forth to us, by deliverance from thoſe troubles and ſorrows, which men are ſubject to in this world; " and God ſhall " wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there " ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor cry- " ing, neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the " former things are paſt away."

Thus it is with us in this world, we are liable to ſorrow and pain and death: but when we are once got to heaven, none of theſe things ſhall approach us. " The former things are paſſed away," that is, the evils we formerly endured, are paſt and over, and ſhall never return to afflict us any more.

And is not this a great comfort, when we are labouring under the evils of this life, and conflicting ſorely with the miſeries of it; that we ſhall one day be paſt all theſe, and find a ſafe refuge and retreat from all theſe ſtorms and tempeſts: when we are loaded with afflictions, and even tired with the burden of them, and ready to faint and ſink under it; to think that " there remains a reſt for us, into " which we ſhall ſhortly enter?" How can it chooſe but be a mighty conſolation to us, whilſt we are in this " vale of tears and troubles," to be aſſured that the time is coming " when God ſhall wipe away all " tears from our eyes, and there ſhall be no more " ſorrow nor crying?"

There are none of us, but are obnoxious to any of the evils of this life; we feel ſome of them, and we fear more: our outward condition, it may be, is uncomfortable, we are poor and perſecuted; [illegible] ſtitute of friends, or have [illegible] enemies;

deſpoiled of many of thoſe comforts and enjoyments which we once had: our bodies perhaps are in pain, or our ſpirits troubled; or though we have no real cauſe of outward trouble, yet our ſouls are ill lodged, in the dark dungeon of a body; over-powered with a melancholy humour, which keeps out all light and comfort from our minds. SERM. LXXIX.

And is it no reviving to us, to think of that happy hour, when we ſhall find a remedy and redreſs of all theſe evils at once? Of that bleſſed place, where we ſhall take ſanctuary, from all thoſe afflictions and troubles which purſued us in this world? Where ſorrow, and miſery, and death are perfect ſtrangers, and into which nothing that can render men in the leaſt unhppy, can ever enter? Where our ſouls ſhall be in perfect reſt and contentment, and our bodies after a while ſhall be reſtored and reunited to our ſouls; not to cloud and clog them as they do here, but ſo happily changed, and refined to ſuch a perfection, that they ſhall be ſo far from giving any diſturbance to our minds, that they ſhall mightily add to their pleaſure and happineſs?

And when we are once landed in thoſe bleſſed regions, what a comfort will it be to us, to ſtand on the ſhore, and look back upon thoſe rough and dangerous ſeas, which we have eſcaped? How pleaſant to conſider the manifold evils and calamities which we are freed from, and for ever ſecured againſt? To remember our paſt labours and ſufferings, and to be able to defy all thoſe temptations, which were wont to aſſault us in this world, with ſo much violence, and with too much ſucceſs?

And this is the condition of the bleſſed ſpirits above. They find a perfect ceſſation of all afflictions

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and troubles, "they reſt from their labours." But this is not all: for,

2. They are not only freed from all the evils and ſufferings they were exerciſed withal in this world: but they ſhall receive a plentiful reward of all the good they have done in it; "their works do accom-"pany them." When pious ſouls go out of this world, they do not only leave all the evils of the world behind them; but they carry along with them all the good they have done, to reap there the comfort and reward of it. Juſt as, on the other hand, wicked men, when they die, leave all the good things of this world, all the pleaſures and enjoyments behind them; but the guilt and remorſe of their wicked lives accompany them, and ſtick cloſe to them, to torment them there, and that there they may be tormented for them.

Thus the ſcriptures repreſent to us the different condition of good and bad men, Iſai. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with "him: for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. "Wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with them: for "the reward of his hands ſhall be given him." Which is many times true in this world; but however that happen, will moſt certainly and remarkably be made good in the other. And this is moſt emphatically expreſſed to us, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 25. where the rich man petitions Abraham for ſome eaſe, and Abraham returns him this anſwer; "Son, remember that "thou in thy life time receiveddſt thy good things, "and likewiſe Lazarus evil things: but now he is "comforted, and thou art tormented." What a change was here! How comfortable to the one, and

how diſmal to the other! Lazarus found reſt from all his labours and ſufferings, and his piety and patience accompanied him into the other world, and conveyed him into Abraham's boſom. Whereas the rich man was parted from all his good things, and the guilt of his ſins went along with him, and lodged him in the place of torment. SERM. LXXIX.

But my text confines me to the bright ſide of this proſpect; the conſideration of that glorious recompence which good men ſhall receive, for the good works which they have done in this world. Indeed the text doth not expreſly ſay, that their works ſhall be rewarded, but that "they ſhall go along with "them," and that they are bleſſed upon this account; and this implies that they ſhall receive a ſure reward. For as the apoſtle reaſons, "God is not "unrighteous to forget our work and labour of "love. Verily there is a reward for the righteous," as ſure as "there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

But how great and glorious that ſhall be, I am not in any meaſure able to declare to you. It may ſuffice, that the ſcripture hath aſſured us in general, that God is the rewarder of good men, and that he will make them happy, not according to what can now enter into our narrow thoughts, but "according to "the exceeding greatneſs of his power" and goodneſs. If we are to receive our reward from God, we need not doubt, but it will be very large, and ſuch as is every way worthy of him to beſtow. For he is a great king, and of great goodneſs; and we may ſafely refer ourſelves to him, in confidence that he will conſider us, not according to the meanneſs of our ſervice, but according to the vaſtneſs of his treaſures, and the infinite bounty of his mind. If

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he hath promiſed to make us happy, though he hath not particularly declared to us, wherein this happineſs ſhall conſiſt; yet we may truſt him that made us, to find out ways to make us happy; and may believe, that he who made us without our knowledge or deſire, is able to make us happy beyond them both.

Only for the greater encouragement of our holineſs and obedience, though he hath promiſed to reward every good man, far beyond the proportion of any good he hath or can do; yet he hath declared, that theſe rewards ſhall be proportionably greater or leſs, according to the degree of every man's piety and virtue. So our SAVIOUR tells us, that "they who "are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, great ſhall "be their reward in heaven," Matt. v. 12. That there will be a difference between the reward of a righteous man, and a prophet; that is, of one who is more publickly and eminently uſeful for the ſalvation of others. And among thoſe who are teachers of others, they that are moſt induſtrious, and conſequently more likely to be ſucceſsful in this work, ſhall have a more glorious reward; as we are told by the angel, Dan. xii. 3. "And they that are "wiſe," (or as it is in the margin rendered, "they "that be teachers) ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of "the firmament, and they that turn many to righ-"teouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever." So likewiſe we find in the parable of the talents, that he that improved his talent to ten, was made ruler over ten cities. And St. Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 6. ſpeaking of the degrees of mens charity and liberality towards the poor, ſays expreſly, "he that ſoweth ſpa-"ringly, ſhall reap ſparingly; but he that ſoweth "boun-

" bountifully, ſhall reap bountifully;" which by proportion of reaſon may be extended to the exerciſe of all other graces and virtues, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. The apoſtle there repreſents the different degrees of glory, which good men ſhall be inveſted with at the reſurrection, by the different glory and ſplendor of the heavenly luminaries. " There is one glory of " the ſun, another of the moon, and another glory " of the ſtars; for one ſtar differeth from another " ſtar in glory: ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the " dead." So that the more any man ſuffers for GOD and the more patiently he ſuffers, the more holily and virtuouſly, the more charitably and uſefully he lives in this world; the more good works will accompany him into the next, and the greater and more glorious reward he may hope to receive there; which as the apoſtle reaſons (in the concluſion of that chapter, concerning the doctrine of the reſurrection) ought to be a mighty encouragement to every one of us, not only to be " ſtedfaſt and un- " moveable") that is, fixed and reſolute in the profeſſion and practice of our religion) but " abound- " ing likewiſe in the work of the LORD; foraſmuch " as we know, that our labour is not in vain in the " LORD." SERM. LXXIX.

Every degree of diligence and induſtry, in the work and ſervice of GOD, will moſt certainly one day turn to a happy account. " Having therefore " ſuch promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe our- " ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, per- " fecting holineſs in the fear of GOD." The more perfectly holy we are here on earth; the more perfectly happy we ſhall be in heaven, and continue ſo to all eternity.

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I have now done with the two reaſons, which are here given in the text, of the happineſs that good men, ſuch as "die in the LORD," ſhall be made partakers of in another life; becauſe "they reſt from "their labours, and their works accompany them;" they are freed from all the evils which they ſuffered, and ſhall receive the reward of all the good they have done in this life.

I ſhould now have proceeded to make ſome inferences from this diſcourſe; but thoſe I will reſerve for another diſcourſe on this ſubject.

All that I ſhall add at preſent, as the application of what I have already ſaid, is, that this ſhould ſtir us up to a careful and zealous imitation of thoſe bleſſed perſons deſcribed in the text, "who are dead "in the LORD, and are at reſt from their labours, "and whoſe works do accompany them." Let us imitate them, in their faith and patience, in their piety and good works, and in their conſtancy to GOD, and his truth, which was dearer to them than their lives.

Thus their virtues and ſufferings are deſcribed in the viſions of this book, chap. xiii. 10. "Here is "the patience and the faith of the ſaints;" and chap. xiv. 12. "Here is the patience of the ſaints: "here are they that keep the commandments of "GOD, and the faith of JESUS;" and chap. xii. 11. "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, "and by the word of their teſtimony; and they "loved not their lives unto the death.

In this way, and by theſe ſteps, all the ſaints and martyrs of all ages, have aſcended up to heaven, and attained to that bleſſed ſtate, which they are now poſſeſſed of, after all the evils which they ſuffered

in

in this world. "They are now at reſt from their "labours," and all the good works which they have done, "are gone along with them," and they are now, and ſhall for ever be, receiving the comfort and reward of them. And if we tread in their ſteps, by a zealous imitation of the piety and holineſs of their lives, and of the conſtancy and patience of their ſufferings; we ſhall one day be tranſlated into their bleſſed ſociety, and made partakers with them of the ſame glorious reward. If we "have "our fruit unto holineſs;" our end ſhall be "ever-"laſting life." If we "be faithful unto death; "we ſhall receive a crown of life." SERM. LXXIX.

Let us then, as the apoſtle to the Hebrews exhorts, chap. vi. 11, 12. "Every one of us ſhew "the ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope, "unto the end: and let us not be ſlothful; but fol-"lowers of them, who through faith and patience "inherit the promiſes."

"Now the GOD of peace, who brought again "from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the "great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood "of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in "every good word and work, working in you that "which is well-pleaſing in his ſight."

SERMON LXXX.

The bleſſedneſs of good men after death.

REV. XIV. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the dead which die in the LORD, *from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

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The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN my explication of theſe words I told you, that they are, in the general ſenſe and meaning of them, a ſolemn declaration of the bleſſed eſtate of good men after this life; but delivered upon a ſpecial occaſion, as is ſignified by that expreſſion, "from "henceforth;" that is, from the time of that viſion, in which was repreſented to St. John, the laſt and extremeſt perſecution of the faithful ſervants of CHRIST, and which ſhould precede the fatal downfal of Babylon; from that time, "bleſſed are the "dead which die in the LORD;" that is, conſidering the extremity, and the cruel circumſtances of this laſt and ſevereſt perſecution, we may, from that time forward, reckon thoſe who are already dead (ſuppoſing that they "died in the LORD") to be very happy; in that they do not live to ſee and ſuffer thoſe grievous things, which then will befal the faithful ſervants of GOD.

In my former diſcourſe, I conſidered the words according to the general intention of them, abſtracting

ing from the particular occaſion, upon which they were ſpoken, endeavouring to ſet forth the happy eſtate of good men after this life, from the two reaſons and grounds mentioned in the text, namely, becauſe "they reſt from their labours," and becauſe "their works do follow," or accompany and go along with "them;" which two particulars conſtitute the happineſs of the future ſtate. SERM. LXXX.

That which farther remains, and to which I now proceed, is to make ſome inferences from what I have ſaid upon this ſubject. And in doing this, I ſhall have an eye on the ſpecial occaſion of the words, as well as on their general intention. And the inferences ſhall be theſe following.

Firſt, If thoſe that "die in the LORD" are "at "reſt from their labours" and pains; then the text concludes directly againſt the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome, which ſuppoſeth a great number of thoſe that "die in the LORD," and have "obtained eternal redemption" by him from hell, not to paſs immediately into happineſs; but to be detained in the ſuburbs of hell, in great pain and torment, till their ſouls be purged, and the debt of temporary puniſhment, to which they are liable, be ſome way or other paid off and diſcharged.

Secondly, Here is a mighty encouragement to piety and virtue, to conſider, that all the good we do in this world will accompany us into the other.

Thirdly, It is a great encouragement to patience under the ſufferings and perſecutions which attend good men in this world; that how heavy and grievous ſoever they are at preſent, they will end with this life, and we ſhall then "reſt from all our labours."

Fourthly, The conſideration of the extreme ſufferings of Chriſtians in the laſt times, and which perhaps

SERM. LXXX. perhaps are not far from us, ſhould render us very indifferent to life, and all the enjoyments of it, ſo as even to eſteem it a particular grace and favour of GOD, to be "taken away from the evil to come," and by death to prevent (if he ſees it good, thoſe extremities of ſufferings, which ſeem to be haſtening upon the world.

I. If thoſe "that die in the LORD are at reſt from "all their labours" and pains; then this text concludes directly againſt the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome, which ſuppoſeth a great number, yea the far greateſt part of thoſe "that die in the "LORD," and have "obtained eternal redemp-"tion" by him from hell, not to paſs immediately into happineſs, but to be detained ſomewhere (they are not certain where, but moſt probably in the ſuburbs of hell) in great pain and torment, equal in degree to that of hell, and differing only in duration; I ſay, to be detained there, till their ſouls be purged from the defilements they have contracted in this world, and the debt of temporary puniſhments, to which they are liable, be ſome way or other paid off and diſcharged.

They ſuppoſe indeed ſome very few holy men to be ſo perfect at their departure out of this life, that they do immediately, and without any ſtop, paſs into heaven, becauſe they need no purgation; and thoſe likewiſe who ſuffer martyrdom, becauſe they diſcharge their debt of temporary puniſhments here: but the generality of Chriſtians "who die in the "LORD," they ſuppoſe ſo imperfect, as to ſtand in need of being purged by fire, and accordingly that they are detained a longer or ſhorter time, as their debt of temporary puniſhments is greater or leſs.

And

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And indeed they have a very conſiderable and ſubſtantial reaſon, to exempt as few as poſſibly they can from going to purgatory; becauſe the more they put in fear of going thither, the market of indulgences riſeth the higher, and the profit thence accruing to the pope's coffers; and the more and greater legacies will be left to the prieſts, to hire their ſaying of maſſes, for the delivery of ſouls out of the place of torments: for though the prayers of friends and relations will contribute ſomething to this; yet nothing does the buſineſs ſo effectually, as the maſſes and prayers of prieſts to that end.

But how is it then that St. John ſays, that thoſe "that die in the LORD are happy," becauſe "they "reſt from their labours;" if ſo be, the far greateſt part of thoſe "who die in the LORD;" are ſo far from "reſting from their labours," that they enter into far greater pains and torments, than ever they endured in this world? And therefore Bellarmine, that their doctrine of purgatory may receive no prejudice from this text, would have "from hence-"forth," in the text, to be dated from the day of judgment; when he ſuppoſeth the pains of purgatory will be at an end. But why, "from hence-"forth," ſhould take date from the day of judgment, he can give no reaſon, but only to ſave purgatory from being condemned by this text. For St. John plainly ſpeaks of the happineſs of thoſe that ſhould die after that time, (whatever it be) which he there deſcribes; but that time cannot be the day of judgment, becauſe none ſhall die after that time. Juſt thus Eſtius (one of their moſt learned commentators) deals with another text, which by the generality of their writers is urged as a plain proof of purgatory; "he ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as "by

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"by fire:" upon which he ſays, it is ſufficient that there is nothing in this text againſt purgatory. Sufficient, for what? not to prove purgatory, as they generally pretend from this text: but to ſave it harmleſs from it; as if we had pretended that this text makes againſt it.

But there are others that make againſt it with a witneſs. Not only the perpetual ſilence of ſcripture about it, when there are ſo many fair occaſions of ſpeaking of it; as in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the future ſtate is ſo particularly deſcribed, and yet no mention made, nor the leaſt intimation given of this third ſtate: but beſides the ſilence of ſcripture about it, there are ſeveral paſſages utterly inconſiſtent with it; as namely, St. Paul's diſcourſe in the beginning of the fifth chapter of the ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians, where he plainly declares the aſſurance he had, that all ſincere Chriſtians, ſo ſoon as they quit the body, do paſs into happineſs: "For we know, (ſays he) that if our "earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved; "we have a building of GOD, a houſe not made "with hands, eternal in the heavens." The plain meaning of which is, that ſo ſoon as we quit the one, we ſhall paſs into the other. And this conſideration, he tells us, made Chriſtians weary of this world, and willing to die; ver, 2. "For in this we groan ear-"neſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe, "which is from heaven;" and ver. 4. "For we "that are in this tabernacle do groan, being bur-"dened." But had Chriſtians believed, that the greateſt part of them, when they left the body, were to go into purgatory, to be terribly tormented there; they would not have been in ſuch haſte to die; but would have protracted the time as long as they could,

and

and have contentedly borne the burden of this earthly tabernacle, rather than to quit it, for a condition a thouſand times more intolerable. But St. Paul expreſly ſays, that Chriſtians knew the contrary, and that as ſoon as ever they went out of the body, they ſhould be happy, and with the LORD; and that this gave them courage againſt the fears of death; ver. 6. "Therefore we are always confident, "θαῤῥοῦντες οὖν πάντοτε, *bono igitur animo ſumus*; "Therefore we are always of good courage, know- "ing that whilſt we are at home in the body, we "are abſent from the LORD." And ver. 8. "We "are of good courage, I ſay, and willing rather to "be abſent from the body, and preſent with the "LORD." The plain ſenſe of which is, that Chriſtians were willing rather to die than to live; becauſe they knew, that ſo ſoon as they left the body, and departed this life, they ſhould "be preſent with the "LORD." But now if the doctrine of purgatory be true, this whole reaſoning of St. Paul proceeds upon a groſs miſtake; and therefore I am certain it is not true: and ſo does the voice from heaven here in the text; "Bleſſed are the dead which die in the LORD, "that they may reſt from their labours:" for there is no reaſon to reſtrain this general expreſſion, "that "die in the LORD," only to the martyrs; for though they are certainly included, and perhaps primarily intended in it; yet this phraſe comprehends all thoſe "who die in the faith of CHRIST," and is moſt frequently ſo uſed in the new teſtament.

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But let this ſuffice to have been ſpoken of this matter, eſpecially ſince biſhop Fiſher, and ſeveral of their own learned writers, do ſo frankly acknowledge, that their doctrine of purgatory hath no ſufficient ground in ſcripture. Other reaſons I grant they have for it, which

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which make them very loth to quit it; it is a very profitable doctrine, and therefore they have taken care to have it more abundantly confirmed, by apparitions of ſouls from the dead, than any other doctrine whatſoever. In ſhort, how little ſoever they can ſay for it; it is in vain to go about to perſuade them to part with it. Demetrius the ſilver-ſmith argued as well as he could for his goddeſs Diana, from the univerſal conſent of the world in the worſhip of her; "the great goddeſs Diana, whom all "Aſia and the world worſhipeth." But his truſty argument to his workmen was, "Sirs, ye know that "by this craft we have our wealth, and this our "craft is in danger to be ſet at nought."

II. Here is a mighty encouragement to piety and virtue, to conſider that all the good we do in this world will accompany us into the other. "Bleſ-"ſed are the dead which die in the LORD; for "their works accompany them."

When we come to die, we can call nothing our own but the good works which by the grace of GOD we have been enabled to do in this life. Theſe will ſtick by us, and bear us company into the other world, when we ſhall be ſtript of all other things, and forced to part from them, whether we will or no. Our riches and our honours, our ſenſual pleaſures and delights, will all take their leave of us, when we leave this world; nay, many times they do not accompany us ſo far as the grave, but leave us very unkindly and unſeaſonably, when we have the greateſt need and uſe of them.

There is one way indeed, whereby we may ſecure our riches, and make ſure friends to ourſelves of them; by laying them out in charity By this means we may ſend them before us, and conſign them

them over to another world, to make way for our reception there. So our LORD aſſures us, Luke xii. 33. that "by giving alms we provide ourſelves bags "which wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens which "faileth not;" and Luke xvi. 9. that by this way we may "make to ourſelves friends of the mammon "of unrighteouſneſs; that when we fail, they may "receive us into everlaſting habitations" The mammon of unrighteouſneſs, what is that? It is what the ſcripture elſewhere calls deceitful riches; becauſe in other ways, in which men commonly lay them out, they turn to no certain account, but one way or other do deceive and fruſtrate our expectation: but by diſpoſing of them in charity, to the relief of the poor and perſecuted, we make ſure friends of them, and conſign the effects of them to our certain benefit and advantage in another world. SERM. LXXX.

And as charity, ſo likewiſe all other graces and virtues are that good part which cannot be taken away from us. All the good actions that we do in this life, will go with us to the grave, and bear us company into the other world, and will ſtand by us, when we come to appear before our judge, and through the merits of our bleſſed SAVIOUR will procure for us, at the hands of a gracious and merciful GOD, a moſt ample and eternal reward.

And what an encouragement is this to holineſs and virtue, to conſider that it will be all our own another day, and turn to our unſpeakable advantage at our great account? To be aſſured, that whoever ſerves GOD faithfully, lays up ſo much treaſure for himſelf, which he may take along with him into the other world; and does provide for himſelf laſting comforts and faithful companions, which will never leave him nor forſake him; a happineſs large as his deſires, and durable and immortal as his ſoul! Let

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Let us then do all the good that poſſibly we can, whilſt we have opportunity: let us ſerve GOD induſtriouſly, and with all our might, knowing that no good action that we do ſhall be loſt and fall to the ground, that no grace and virtue that we practiſe in this life, nor any degree of them, ſhall loſe their reward. If we faithfully improve the talents, which are committed to us, to our maſter's advantage; when he comes to call us to an account, and finds that we have done ſo, we ſhall not fail to receive both his approbation and reward. And what a comfort will it be to any one of us, to hear thoſe bleſſed words from the mouth of our LORD; "Well done "thou good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been "faitful in a little, I will make thee ruler over "much; enter thou into the joy of thy LORD!" We ſhall not need to plead our ſervices to him, and put him in mind of them: our judge himſelf will celebrate our good deeds upon the theatre of the world, and commemorate them to our advantage; and interpret every good office we have done, to any of his poor and afflicted members, as if it had been a kindneſs immediately done to himſelf. So our LORD repreſents the proceedings of the great Judge and King of the world, in the great day of recompence, Matt. xxv. 34. "Then ſhall the King ſay unto them "on his right hand, Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the "foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, "and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty, and ye gave "me drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in: "naked, and ye clothed me: I was ſick, and ye viſited me: I was in priſon, and ye came unto me. "Then ſhall the righteous anſwer him, ſaying, "LORD, when ſaw we thee" in any of theſe circumſtances;

ſtances; "hungry, or thirſty, or a ſtranger, or "naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and miniſtred unto "thee? And the king ſhall anſwer and ſay unto "them, verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have "done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, "ye have done it unto me." Who would not be ambitious and glad to ſerve ſuch a prince, who will ſo benignly interpret, and ſo bountifully reward the leaſt ſervice we do to him! SERM. LXXX.

III. The conſideration of this ſhould likewiſe be a great argument and ſupport to our patience, under all thoſe evils, and ſufferings, and perſecutions, which many times attend good men in this world. They are for the preſent perhaps very heavy and grievous: but there is a time ſhortly coming, when we ſhall be at eaſe, and perfectly freed from them; when we ſhall find reſt from our labours and ſufferings; when we ſhall enter into peace, and reſt in our beds, every one walking in his uprightneſs; that is, reaping the comfort, and enjoying the reward of his ſincerity towards God, and conſtant ſuffering for his cauſe and truth. And therefore it was well ſaid of a good man, bleſſed be God that we are to die; becauſe to good men, that is a certain remedy of all the evils of this life, and will unqueſtionably put an end to them. The grave is a place of reſt, and diſcharge from all trouble, as Job elegantly deſcribes it, chap. iii. 17, 18, 19. "There the wicked ceaſe from troubling: "there the weary be at reſt. There the priſoners "reſt together, they hear not the voice of the op- "preſſor. The ſmall and the great are there, and "the ſervant is free from his maſter."

So ſoon as we enter into the other world, we are ſecure againſt the purſuit and danger of all thoſe evils which afflicted us in this world; and nothing

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will remain but the joyful remembrance of our ſufferings, and the plentiful reward of our conſtancy and patience under them. And the more our tribulations and perſecutions have abounded, the greater will our comfort and happineſs then be, "which "(ſaith St. Paul) is a manifeſt token," a clear de- "monſtration, "of the righteous judgment of "GOD, that ye may be accounted worthy of the "kingdom of GOD, for which ye alſo ſuffer; ſeeing "it is a righteous thing with GOD, to recompence "to you who are troubled, reſt with us, when the "LORD JESUS ſhall be revealed from heaven with "his mighty angels," 2 Theſſ. i. 5, 6, 7.

IV. The conſideration of the extreme ſufferings, which are to fall upon the faithful ſervants of CHRIST in the laſt times, and which ſeem now to be begun in the world, ſhould make us very contented to leave this world, and glad of any fair opportunity and excuſe, to take our leave of it, and to be out of the reach and danger of thoſe violent and more than human temptations, with which our faith and conſtancy may be aſſailed: nay, to eſteem it a particular grace and favour of GOD to us, to be taken away from the evil to come, and to prevent (if GOD ſees it good) thoſe extremities of ſufferings which are coming upon the world.

Theſe ſeem now to be begun in ſome part of it: they in our neighbour nation have a bitter cup put into their hands; a cup of aſtoniſhment to all thoſe that hear of it. Whether this be that laſt and extreme perſecution ſpoken of here by St. John, I ſhall not pretend poſitively to determine. It is plainly diſtinguiſhed in the viſions, from that under the firſt beaſt, deſcribed Rev. xiii. from verſe the firſt, to verſe 11. And chap. xvii. there is a deſcription of,

"the

" the beaſt upon which the woman ſitteth, on whoſe SERM.
" forehead is a name written, **Myſtery, Babylon** LXXX.
" **the Great:**" and this beaſt is there ſaid to have ſeven heads and ten horns, which are thus explained by St. John, chap. xvii. 9, 10. " And here is the " mind which hath wiſdom; the ſeven heads are " ſeven mountains upon which the woman ſitteth; " and there are ſeven kings," that is, (as is generally agreed by interpreters) a ſucceſſion of ſeven governments: and verſe 12, 13, 14. " And the ten " horns which thou ſaweſt are ten kings, which " have received no kingdoms as yet; but receive " power as kings one hour with the beaſt. Theſe " have one mind, and ſhall give their power and " ſtrength unto the beaſt; and ſhall make war with " the lamb." And verſe 18. " And the woman " which thou ſaweſt, is that great city which reign- " eth over the kings of the earth."

So that this beaſt is plainly the Roman empire; and the woman that ſitteth upon her, is the great city ſtanding upon ſeven mountains, which reigneth over the kings of the earth, which can be no other than Rome, as is agreed by interpreters on all ſides. Bellarmine (l. 2. c. 2. de Rom. Pontif.) confeſſeth that St. John in the Revelation every where calleth Rome, Babylon, as Tertullian (ſaith he) hath noted, and as is plain from chap. xvii. where Babylon is ſaid to be ſeated on ſeven mountains, and to have dominion over the kings of the earth: there being no other city than Rome, which in the time of St. John had dominion over the kings of the earth; and that Rome was built upon ſeven hills is famous. Thus much Bellarmine acknowledgeth, conſtrained by the force of truth; and for another ſmall reaſon, namely, becauſe St. Peter writes his firſt epiſtle

SERM. LXXX. from Babylon, by which if Rome be not meant, they have no proof from ſcripture, that St. Peter was ever there.

Indeed they of the church of Rome would have it to be only Rome pagan. But that cannot be; becauſe this beaſt, after his laſt head was wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed, had power given him to continue two and forty months, or (as it is elſewhere expreſſed,) 1260 days; that is, in the prophetick ſtile, ſo many years; and likewiſe becauſe it was not to begin till the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire upon its diſſolution was divided, were ſet up; which was not till after the weſtern empire was overthrown and deſtroyed by the Goths and Vandals. And laſtly, becauſe this is that Rome or Babylon, which ſhould finally be deſtroyed, and caſt as a milſtone into the bottom of the ſea, never to riſe again; which is yet to come. And of this beaſt it is ſaid, that he ſhould "make "war with the ſaints, and overcome them." chap. xiii. ver. 7. that is, that he ſhould raiſe a long and great perſecution againſt them, which ſhould try their faith and patience; ver. 10. "Here is the pa-"tience, and the faith of the ſaints." The beaſt then with ten horns, muſt be Rome, governing the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire was broken; and this can be nothing elſe but Rome papal, to which the ten kings are ſaid to give their power, and to which they were in a moſt ſervile manner ſubject for ſeveral ages, as is plain from hiſtory.

And to confirm this, it is very obſervable, that the ancient fathers generally agree, that "that which "hindered the revealing of the wicked one," (ſpoken of by St. Paul, 2 Theſſ. ii. 7, 8.) was the Roman empire;

empire; and that being removed, the man of ſin or antichriſt was to ſucceed in its room. I ſhall produce a few teſtimonies to this purpoſe, but very remarkable ones. Tertullian expounding what St. Paul means, by him that with-holdeth or letteth, hath theſe words, *Quis, niſi Romanus ſtatus*, &c? Who is that, but the Roman ſtate, which being broken into ten kings, ſhall bring on antichriſt? And then "the wicked one ſhall be revealed." And in his apology he gives this reaſon, why the Chriſtians ſhould pray for the Roman emperors, and the whole ſtate of the empire; becauſe the greateſt miſchief hanging over the world, is hindered by the continuance of it. St. Chryſoſtom ſpeaking of that which hinders the revelation of the man of ſin; this (ſays he) can be no other, than the Roman empire: for as long as that ſtands, he dares not ſhew himſelf; but upon the vacancy or ceaſing of that, he ſhall aſſume to himſelf both the power of GOD and man. St. Auſtin, in his book *de Civit. Dei*, no man (ſays he) doubts, but that the ſucceſſor of the Roman emperor in Rome ſhall be the man of ſin; and we know who hath ſucceeded him. SERM. LXXX.

But now after this, another beaſt is repreſented coming out of the earth; not ſucceeding in the place of the firſt beaſt, but appearing during his continuance, ver. 12. and he hath theſe remarkable characters, by which he may be known.

1. He is ſaid to have but two horns; by which, according to the interpretation of the ten horns, ſignifying the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire after its diſſolution ſhould be divided, we are in all reaſon to underſtand two of theſe kingdoms, of which this beaſt, whoever he be, ſhall be poſſeſſed.

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2. He is said to be like a lamb, but to speak like a dragon; that is, to pretend and make a shew of great lenity and mildness, in his proceedings; but that really he shall be very cruel. It shall be pretended, that he does all without violence, and without arms; but he shall speak as a dragon, that is, in truth shall exercise great force and cruelty; either alluding to the cruelty of the dragon, literally so called; or perhaps prophetically pointing at a particular sort of armed soldiers, called by that name of dragons, or, as we according to the French pronunciation call them, dragoons.

3. He shall arise during the continuance of the first beast, and engage in his cause; but the first beast shall only stand by and look on, ver. 12. "and he exerciseth all the power of the first beast, "before him, and causeth the earth and them that "dwell therein, to worship the beast, whose deadly "wound was healed;" plainly declaring that this persecution should not immediately arise from the first beast, which is said to come out of the sea, which in this prophecy denotes the state ecclesiastical; but from the second beast, which comes out of the earth, and denotes the temporal power. But yet all this ought to be acted in the sight of the first beast, and in his behalf, to compel men to worship him.

4. That he shall be remarkable for causing fire to come down from heaven to earth, in a wonderful manner, to the great terror and amazement of men; ver. 13. "And he doth great wonders; so that he "maketh fire to com[illegible]n from heaven on the "earth in the sight o[illegible]."

5. That he should [illegible]erdict all those, who would not worship the beast, all commerce with human society,

ſociety, the exerciſe of civil trades and profeſſions; SERM. LXXX.
ver. 17. "And he cauſeth, that no man might buy "or ſell, ſave he that had the mark of the beaſt."

6. And laſtly (which ſems to be the moſt peculiar and characteriſtical note of all the reſt,) that his number ſhould be 666, that is, (as moſt of the ancients underſtand it,) that the numeral letters of a certain word or name, ſhould, being computed, amount to that number. And it is expreſly ſaid to be "the num- "ber of a man." ver. 18. "Let him that hath un- "derſtanding count the number of the beaſt; for it "is the number of a man." And in the verſe before, it is ſaid to be "the number of his name."

Now to whom all theſe characters do agree, and eſpecially the laſt, concerning the "number of his "name," I ſhall not preſume to conjecture; much leſs poſitively to determine, whether he be now in being; becauſe it is ſaid to require a particular wiſdom and underſtanding to find it out. "Here is wiſ- "dom; let him that hath underſtanding count the "number of the beaſt." However the event, when the thing is fully accompliſhed, will clearly diſcover it. Thus much is certain, that this extreme perſecution, whenever it ſhall be, will forerun the final deſtruction of Babylon, which will not then be far off. And concerning this it is that St. John ſpeaks, chap. xiv. 12. when he ſays, "Here is the patience of the "ſaints, here are they that keep the commandments "of GOD, and the faith of JESUS." And then he immediately adds, as it is in the text, "and I heard "a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, "Bleſſed are the dead which die in the LORD, from "henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may "reſt from their labours; and their works do ac- "company them." Thus much may ſuffice to have been ſpoken on this text.

Preached on All-ſaints day.

SERMON LXXXI.

The vanity and wickedneſs of honouring dead ſaints, and perſecuting the living.

LUKE XI. 49, 50, 51.

Therefore, alſo ſaid the wiſdom of GOD, *I will ſend them prophets and apoſtles, and ſome of them they ſhall ſlay, and perſecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was ſhed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which periſhed between the altar and the temple: verily I ſay unto you, it ſhall be required of this generation.*

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THE latter part of this chapter is a very ſharp, but juſt invective, made by our SAVIOUR againſt the hypocriſy of the ſcribes and phariſees, of which he gives many inſtances; and this among the reſt for one, that they pretended a great honour and reſpect for the righteous men, and prophets of former ages, whom their fathers had perſecuted and ſlain; but yet were of the very ſame ſpirit and temper, and as ready to perſecute good men, as their fathers were. They raiſed indeed ſtately monuments to the memory of thoſe ſaints and martyrs, and adorned them with great art and coſt, and it is likely made a great ſhew of eſteem and veneration for them: but all this while they were of the ſame diſpoſition with

with their fathers, and bare the ſame implacable ha- SERM. LXXXI.
tred and malice againſt the prophets and righteous men who then lived among them, (yea againſt that great prophet, whom GOD had ſent into the world, JESUS the Son of GOD,) which their fathers did againſt the good men of their times. And though they diſclaimed the cruelty and wickedneſs of their fathers, with never ſo much zeal and vehemency; yet for all that, they were ready to do the ſame things. Now this was ſo groſs and odious a piece of hypocriſy in them, that our SAVIOR doth with great reaſon denounce ſo ſevere a woe againſt them: "Woe "unto you; for ye build the ſepulchres of the pro- "phets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye "bear witneſs, that ye allow the deeds of your "fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build "their ſupulchres." And then it follows; "there- "fore alſo ſaid the wiſdom of GOD, I will ſend them "prophets, and apoſtles, and ſome of them they "ſhall ſlay and perſecute: that the blood of all the "prophets, which was ſhed from the foundation of "the world may be required of this generation; "from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, "which periſhed between the altar and the temple."

There are conſiderable difficulties in both theſe paſſages. As to the former, "Wo unto you; for "ye build the ſepulchres of the prophets, and your "fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witneſs, that "ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they in- "deed killed them, and ye build their ſepulchres."

The force of this reaſoning is at firſt ſight not eaſy to be diſcerned; and therefore expoſitors have gone ſeveral ways to explain it.

Some comparing this with the parallel place in St. Matthew's goſpel (chap. xxiii. 29.) will not have our

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Saviour to mean, that by building the ſepulchres of the prophets they expreſſed their approbation of their fathers killing them. They did indeed teſtify by their uſage of the righteous men that lived amongſt themſelves, that they were of the very ſame temper and ſpirit, which their fathers had been of; and that they would have done juſt as their fathers did, if they had been in the ſame circumſtances with their fathers; ſo that they were witneſſes to themſelves (as it is in St. Matthew) "that they were children of "them which killed the prophets;" they owned themſelves their children by deſcent, and their actions witneſſed that they were their children alſo in reſemblance; nay, (as it is there farther intimated) they ſeemed reſolved "to fill up the meaſure of their fathers:" though all the while they pretended not to approve their fathers behaviour; and therefore whilſt they were "building the tombs of the prophets, and garniſh-"ing the ſepulchres of the righteous, they ſaid, if we "had been in the days of our fathers, we would not "have been partakers with them in the blood of the "prophets." And the interpreters that go this way do accordingly render theſe words of St. Luke; not as they are in our tranſlation, "ye bear witneſs that ye "allow the deeds of your fathers:" but, ye bear witneſs, and ye allow (or, are well pleaſed with) the deeds of your fathers; that is, ye own that they were your fathers, who did theſe things; and though ye do not in words allow what they did, yet your inward tempers and diſpoſitions (whether you know it or no) are the very ſame with theirs, which you too plainly teſtify by your actions; ſo that when "you build the ſepulchres of the prophets," you only expoſe the deceitfulneſs and hypocriſy of your hearts, your pretences and your actions directly con-

tradicting each other. Thus some expositors give the sense of this passage.

But others think that our SAVIOUR intended somewhat more, in St. Luke, namely to retort upon them the honour which they seemed to do to the prophets, in building their sepulchres, as an argument that they rejoiced in their death; seeing they were so well content to be at the charge of a monument for them; like Herod who, when he had murdered Aristobulus, made a magnificent funeral for him; or as the Roman historians say of Caracalla, though he hated all good men, whilst they were alive, yet he would pretend to honour them, when they were dead. This some think our SAVIOUR intended in these words, "truly ye bear witness "that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they "indeed killed them, and ye build their sepul-"chres;" as if he had said, hereby ye testify, that ye allow and like very well what your fathers did to the prophets. According to which latter exposition, there seems to be more force and greater sharpness in our SAVIOUR's reproof; as not only charging them with the ill usage of the righteous men of their own times; but moreover making them, by their building the tombs, and garnishing the sepulchres of the ancient prophets, to become as it were accessories to the murder of them.

But leaving this digression, I now proceed to that which I primarily intended, namely, first, to explain the following words, which I have chosen as my present subject, and then to make some observations upon them.

"Therefore also said the wisdom of GOD, I will "send them prophets and apostles, and some of "them they shall slay and persecute; that the blood

"of

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" of all the prophets which was ſhed from the foun-
" dation of the world, may be required of this gene-
" ration; from the blood of Abel, to the blood of
" Zacharias, which periſhed between the altar and
" the temple: verily, I ſay unto you, it ſhall be re-
" quired of this generation."

There are three conſiderable difficulties in the words, which I ſhall endeavour to explain to you.

I. What is meant by " the wiſdom of GOD."

II. Who this Zacharias was, here mentioned by our SAVIOUR; " from the blood of Abel, unto the
" blood of Zacharias, who periſhed between the
" altar and the temple."

III. In what ſenſe, and with what reaſon and juſtice it is here threatned, " that the blood of all the
" prophets and righteous men, ſhed from the foun-
" dation of the world, ſhould be required of that
" generation."

I. What is here meant by the wiſdom of GOD. " Therefore alſo ſaid the wiſdom of GOD, I will
" ſend them prophets and apoſtles, &c." In St. Matthew our SAVIOUR ſpeaks this in his own name, " wherefore behold, I ſend unto you prophets:" for which reaſon ſome think, that by " the wiſdom
" of GOD," our SAVIOUR here deſigned himſelf; as if he had ſaid, therefore I, who am the wiſdom of GOD, declare unto you. But this is not very probable, our SAVIOUR no where elſe in the goſpel ſpeaking of himſelf in any ſuch ſtile, though St. Paul calls him " the power of GOD," and " the
" wiſdom of GOD." Others think that our SAVIOUR here refers to ſome prophecy of the old teſtament, to this purpoſe; " therefore the wiſdom of GOD
" hath ſaid," that is, the holy Spirit of wiſdom, which inſpired the prophets in the old teſtament.

But

But this conceit is utterly without ground; for we find no ſuch paſſage, nor any thing to that ſenſe, in any of the prophets of the old teſtament. SERM. LXXXI.

But the moſt plain and ſimple interpretation is this, "therefore hath the wiſdom of GOD ſaid," that is, the moſt wiſe GOD hath determined to ſend among you ſuch meſſengers and holy men, and I foreſee that ye will thus abuſe them, and thereby bring wrath and deſtruction upon yourſelves. And whereas our SAVIOUR ſays in St. Matthew, "behold I ſend unto "you prophets;" it is very probable, he ſpeaks in GOD's name, and that it is to be underſtood, "behold, ſays GOD, I ſend unto you." And this phraſe of the wiſdom of GOD, for the moſt wiſe GOD is very agreeable to other forms of ſpeech, which we meet with in the jewiſh writers; as, *dicit norma judicii*, "the rule of judgment ſays," that is, the moſt juſt and righteous GOD; which ſerves very well to explain the phraſe in the text, "therefore "ſaith the wiſdom of GOD, I will ſend them pro- "phets and apoſtles."

By apoſtles is here meant all ſorts of divine meſſengers: for ſo St. Matthew expreſſeth it, "I ſend "unto you prophets, and wiſe men, and ſcribes;" that is, ſeveral holy and excellent men, endowed with all ſorts of divine gifts; "prophets, and wiſe "men, and ſcribes," which were the moſt glorious and admired titles among the Jews.

"And ſome of them they ſhall ſlay and perſe- "cute." St. Matthew expreſſeth it more particularly, "ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify;" as it was afterwards fulfilled in the two James's, and Stephen, who were ſlain by them, and in Simon the ſon of Cleophas, and before him in "JESUS the ſon of "GOD," who were crucified; and "ſome of them

"ye

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"ye ſhall ſcourge in your ſynagogues," as we read they did to Peter and John; and "perſecute them "from city to city," as they did Paul and Barnabas. The ſending of theſe meſſengers of GOD among the Jews, and this ill uſage of them, the all-wiſe and all-knowing GOD had determined and foreſeen.

II. Who this Zacharias was, here mentioned by our SAVIOUR. And there are ſo many of them (no leſs than four of this name) to whom it may with ſome probability be applied, but eſpecially to two of them, that it is very hard to determine which of them our SAVIOUR means. Three Zacharias's are mentioned in ſcripture, and one more in the hiſtory of Joſephus.

There was Zacharias the father of John the Baptiſt; but whoſe ſon he was, we do not read; and though of his death the ſcripture is ſilent, yet there are two traditions about it; one that he was ſlain by Herod's officers, becauſe he would not tell where his ſon, John the Baptiſt was, when Herod ſent for him. But the credit of this relies upon very doubtful authors. The other is mentioned by ſeveral of the fathers, and the ſubſtance of it is briefly this; that there being a place in the temple, where the virgins by themſelves uſed to pray, the virgin Mary coming to that place to pray among the virgins, was forbidden, becauſe ſhe had had a child: and that Zacharias for maintaining her virginity, was ſet upon, "and killed "between the temple and the altar." But this tradition is rejected by St. Jerome; and I doubt there is little ground for it.

Zacharias, one of the leſſer prophets, was "the "ſon of Barachias," which agrees ſo far with St. Matthew's deſcription of him: but there is no mention in ſcripture that he was ſlain; nor could he well

be

be in the temple, which was but building in his time; though the author of the targum ſays, that Zacharias the ſon of Ido, was ſlain by the Jews in the houſe of the LORD's ſanctuary, on the day of the propitiation; becauſe he admoniſhed them not to do evil before the LORD. Now Zacharias the ſon of Barachias, was the grandſon of Ido; but yet, I think, this was only lapſe of memory, and that he means Zachary in the Chronicles, who was ſlain by Joaſh. SERM. LXXXI.

And he is the third Zacharias I mentioned, 2 Chr. xxiv. 21. who as he was reproving the people "for "tranſgreſſing the commandment of the LORD, was "ſtoned with ſtones at the commandment of the "king, in the court of the houſe of the LORD." And this our SAVIOUR ſeems more particularly to reflect upon, immediately after the text; "O Jeru-"ſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that ſtoneſt the prophets," &c. Now this one would think was certainly the perſon intended by our SAVIOUR, and fit to be mentioned with Abel, "whoſe blood" is ſaid "to have "cried to the LORD." For of Zacharias it is likewiſe ſaid, that "when he died, he ſaid, the LORD "look upon it, and require it." And Druſius cites a jewiſh writer, ſpeaking thus by way of complaint againſt the jewiſh nation; "becauſe in the "midſt of thee fell the prieſts of the LORD, and his "prophets, and becauſe before the holy temple in "the midſt of thee, was ſlain the godly and righte-"ous prophet Zacharias, who lay unburied, nor did "the earth cover his blood, but to this day it goes "up and ſpeaks in the midſt of thee." So that none could have been more fit to have been joined with Abel in this reſpect.

But

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But as probable as this looks, there are two very great objections againſt it. One is, that St. Matthew calls the Zacharias ſpoken of by our SAVIOUR, the ſon of Barachias; whereas this Zacharias ſlain by Joaſh, was the ſon of Jehoiada: and though it be very conſiderable, which St. Jerome obſerves, that in the Hebrew, or Nazarene goſpel, it is Zacharias the ſon of Jehoiada; yet it is hard to rely upon that, againſt all the Greek copies. But a more difficult objection, in my opinion, is, that our SAVIOUR ſeems to deſign to mention the two extremes, the firſt and laſt righteous man that was ſlain, and between them two comprehended the good men of all ages, that were perſecuted and ſlain; and if ſo, then that Zacharias in the Chronicles, who was ſlain ſo long before, can by no means be the perſon.

There is yet a fourth Zacharias, mentioned by Joſephus, lib. 4. the ſon of Baruch (which is probably enough the ſame name with Barachias) who was the laſt remarkable good man that was ſlain, immediately before the ſiege of Jeruſalem; and that as Joſephus tells us, in the midſt of the temple; which agrees with our SAVIOUR's deſcription of it, "between the altar and the temple;" not the altar of incenſe, but of burnt-offerings, which was in the outward court, before the aſcent to the temple. So that Grotius thinks this was the man intended by our SAVIOUR, yet ſo that he does both allude to the hiſtory of the former Zacharias, and foretel the death of this. And there is but one objection againſt this; that our SAVIOUR ſpeaks of this as already paſt "whom you have ſlain; whereas this Zacharias was not ſlain till after our SAVIOUR's death. But I think that a ſatisfactory anſwer may be given to this (viz.) that our SAVIOUR foretelling thoſe future perſe-

perſecutions, which ſhould fill up the meaſure of their ſins, and bring final deſtruction upon them, he ſpeaks of this as already paſt, becauſe before that deſtruction ſhould come upon them, it would be true, "they had ſlain him:" ſo that ſpeaking of the vengeance coming upon them, well might he ſay, "that upon them ſhould come the blood of all the "righteous men, from Abel to Zacharias, whom "they had ſlain." &c. SERM. LXXXI.

III. The third difficulty remains, and that is, in what ſenſe, and with what reaſon and juſtice it is here threatned, "that the blood of all the prophets "and righteous men, ſhed from the foundation of "the world, ſhould be required of that generation." Some underſtand this more ſtrictly; they ſhould be charged with it, and formally puniſhed for it, becauſe in imitating their cruel predeceſſors, they ſhould be guilty of all their cruelty. But there is no neceſſity of this: all that our SAVIOUR ſeems to intend, is this, that their puniſhment, in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, ſhould be ſo horrible, as if GOD had once for all arraigned them of all the righteous blood that ever had been ſhed in the world, and brought the puniſhment of it upon them; though in truth the puniſhment did not exceed the deſert of their own ſins. And if this be the meaning of it, there is nothing harſh and unreaſonable in it. And thus I have explained, as well as I can, the ſeveral difficulties in the text. I ſhall make two or three obſervations from the main ſcope and deſign of it, and ſo conclude.

I. That it hath been the lot of holy and righteous men, in moſt ages of the world, to meet with very bad uſage, to be perſecuted and ſlain. The devil began this work early. When there were but three men in all the world, and two of them brethren; the

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one ſlew the other, " becauſe he was more righte-
" ous, " and ſerved GOD better than he did. And this trade hath continued, and been practiſed, more or leſs, in moſt ages and generations of the world, as might be deduced through the hiſtory of the old and new teſtament, and of moſt ages ſince: " though " the rod of the wicked hath not always abode upon " the back of the righteous, " leſt at laſt piety ſhould be quite diſcouraged, and " the faithful fail from " among the children of men." The people and the church of GOD have had many intervals of peace and proſperity; and ſometimes for a long continuance, the favour and countenance of authority, and the powers of the world, and the laws of nations on their ſide.

But yet there is a continual " enmity between the " ſeed of the woman, and the ſerpent, between the " righteous and the wicked, between thoſe that " ſerve GOD, and thoſe that ſerve him not; " becauſe their ways are contrary one to another, and quite of another faſhion, their principles and practices do contradict and claſh with one another; the virtues of good men are a continual upbraiding of the bad, a living reproof and reproach to them; ſo that it is no wonder, that evil men do ſo violently hate and perſecute the good, and do by all means endeavour to remove out of the way thoſe who are ſo oppoſite and offenſive to them.

II. We may obſerve likewiſe hence, how great a ſin they are guilty of who perſecute the righteous, and how terrible a vengeance from GOD waits on them. Particular examples of this have been in all ages: but as the guilt of this ſin never went higher, than at this time foretold by our SAVIOUR, when GOD ſent to the Jews ſuch " prophets, and wiſe-
" men,

" men, and ſcribes, " and ſuch a number of them, as never upon any occaſion were ſent into the world, and they uſed them in that bloody and barbarous manner; no wonder, if the vengeance that came upon them were ſuch as never had been before; and if, after they had " filled up the meaſure" of their ſins, by " crucifying the LORD JESUS" and " perſecuting his apoſtles," and " ſtoning and killing " all the prophets " that were ſent unto them, " the " wrath of GOD came upon them to the utmoſt," and ſuch a terrible deſtruction from the LORD, as never befel any people; inſomuch that our SAVIOUR, upon the foreſight and mention of it, forty years before it happened, could not but " weep over them," and expreſs himſelf in thoſe compaſſionate words, " O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the " prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto " thee, how often would I have gathered thee, as " a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; " but ye would not! behold your houſe is left " unto you deſolate." SERM. LXXXI.

III. From this whole paſſage of our SAVIOUR, which I have been explaining to you, we may learn how vain it is for men to pretend to honour the dead ſaints, when they perſecute the living. This was the great hypocriſy of the ſcribes and phariſees among the Jews in our SAVIOUR's time; and is at this day of the rulers and governors of the Roman church among us Chriſtians; nay, they exceed the ſcribes and phariſees, not only in their veneration of the ancient ſaints and righteous men, but alſo, if it be poſſible, in their malice and cruelty towards the living. For they not only build coſtly monuments to their memory, which was the utmoſt the ſcribes and phariſees did, but they honour them

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with ſhrines and rich offerings, with prayers and vows to them, more frequent than to Almighty GOD himſelf and our bleſſed SAVIOUR: but then they hate and perſecute the living, with as great violence and cruelty, as ever was us'd by any part of mankind towards one another. 'Tis true they do it under the notion of hereſy; and ſo did the ſcribes and phariſees too, as St. Paul witneſſeth, "After "the way which ye call hereſy, ſo worſhip I the "GOD of my Fathers, believing all things that are "written in the law and in the prophets." So they call us hereticks; though we receive and believe all that is written in the holy ſcriptures, only rejecting their additions, whereby they "would make the "commandment of GOD of none effect." And as Rome is parallel with Jeruſalem in many other reſpects; ſo eſpecially in the bloody perſecution of righteous men: and as Jeruſalem is charged by our SAVIOUR with "the blood of all the prophets and "righteous men" of all ages; ſo St. John in the Revelation ſays of Rome, that "in her was found "the blood of prophets, and of ſaints, and of all "that were ſlain upon the earth," chap. xviii. 24. Which is no leſs true of Rome chriſtian, than of Rome pagan. In all the Churches and religions in the World, and perhaps in Rome pagan herſelf, hath not ſo much innocent blood been ſhed, as in Rome chriſtian and catholick, and that under a pretence of religion: and no doubt there is a day coming, when ſhe ſhall be called to a heavy account for theſe things "when the heavens ſhall rejoice over her, and "the holy angels and prophets, becauſe GOD hath "avenged them on her."

SER-

SERMON LXXXII.

The danger of zeal, without knowledge.

Preached on November 5. 1682.

ROM. X. 2

I bear them record, that they have a zeal of GOD; *but not according to knowledge.*

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THERE is nothing more commonly cried up, than zeal in religion; and yet there is nothing in which men do more frequently and fatally miſtake and miſcarry, and in the expreſſions and effects whereof Men ought to govern themſelves with more care and caution. To ſpeak the truth, zeal is as all other paſſions are, in it's own nature indifferent, and of itſelf neither good nor bad; but according to the object and degree of it: for zeal is nothing elſe, but "an earneſt concernment for, or "againſt ſomething, and a violent purſuit and pro"ſecution of it." For if it be applied to a right object, ſo as we be earneſtly concerned for things that are unqueſtionably good, and againſt things that are unqueſtionably evil; and in a due degree; that is, if the expreſſion of it be proportionable to the leſs or greater good or evil of things; then it is a commendable quality of virtue; but if it be wrong placed, and we be earneſtly concerned for that which is evil, and againſt that which is good, or about things which are of an indifferent, or doubtful nature, as to the good and evil of them; or if we notoriouſly

SERM. LXXXII. exceed in the degree of it, being more zealously concerned about things, than they deſerve, and zealouſly concerned about leſſer things, to the prejudice of greater; in any of theſe caſes, it is ſo far from being a virtue, that it is a vice of a moſt pernicious and miſchievous conſequence, and many times hath as bad effects, as can proceed from the worſt principle or diſpoſition of mind.

It is ſometimes uſed in a good ſenſe; but it is, when it is applied to the beſt things, in which the honour of GOD, and the ſalvation of men is concerned, to the great and unqueſtionable duties of religion. As zeal for the honour of GOD, and the place of his publick worſhip, in oppoſition to profaneneſs, John ii. 17. "The zeal of thine houſe hath "eaten me up." For an earneſt deſire of thoſe gifts, whereby we are to edify the church, 1 Cor. xii. 31. "But covet earneſtly the beſt gifts," ſo we render the words; "be zealous of the beſt gifts," ſo it is in the Greek. For a forwardneſs and readineſs to relieve the neceſſities of the ſaints, 2 Cor. "ix. 2. I know the forwardneſs of your minds, and "your zeal hath provoked very many." And to the ſame purpoſe is that expreſſion, Tit. ii. 14. "Zealous of good works." And then for a zeal for the ſalvation of mens ſouls, 2 Cor. xi. 2. "I am zea-"lous of you with a godly zeal."

But the word is much more frequently in ſcripture uſed in a bad ſenſe, for a malicious and furious rage, againſt the profeſſors of chriſtianity, Acts, v. 17, 18. "Then the high prieſt, and they that were with "him, were filled with indignation," (the word is zeal) "and laid their hands on the apoſtles, and put "them in priſon." And chap. xiii. 45. it is ſaid, "the Jews were filled with zeal, and ſpake againſt

"thoſe

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'thoſe things which were ſpoken by Paul, contra-
'dicting and blaſpheming." And chap. xvii. 5.
'The Jews which believed not, moved with zeal,
'gathered a company, and ſet all the city in an
'uproar."

'Tis frequently reckoned amongſt "the works of
'the fleſh," and mentioned in the company of the greateſt vices and crimes; wrath, contention, diviſion, ſedition, murders, tumults, confuſions, Rom. xiii. 13. "Let us walk honeſtly as in the day, not
'in chambering and wontonneſs, not in ſtrife and
'zeal." 1 Cor. iii. 3. "Whereas there is among
'you zeal, and ſtrife, and diviſions; are ye not
'carnal?" 2 Cor. xii. 20. "Leſt there be debates,
'zeal, wrath, ſtrife." Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. "The
'works of the fleſh are manifeſt," among which he apoſtle reckons "hatred, variance, zeal, wrath,
'ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders."
St. James calls it a "bitter zeal." Jam. iii. 14, 15, 16. "But if ye have bitter zeal and ſtrife in your
'hearts; glory not, and lye not againſt the truth.
'This wiſdom deſcendeth not from above; but is
'earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh. For where zeal and
'ſtrife is, there is confuſion and every evil work."
By which it appears that zeal moſt frequently goes under a bad name and character in ſcripture; zeal, I mean, in matters of religion; for of that moſt of the texts I have mentioned ſpeak; and this is that which St. Paul means here in the text, by a zeal of GOD, that is, a zeal about religion, and divine things. "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of GOD;
'but not according to knowledge."

In which words, the apoſtle being deſirous to ſay the beſt he could of his countrymen the Jews, he commends the good meaning of their zeal, and

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blames the ill conduct of it, " I bear them record, " μαρτυρῶ αὐτοῖς, I give this teſtimony on their be- " half, that they have a zeal of God, " that is, that by all this fierceneſs againſt the chriſtian religion, they intend the honour of God, and think they do him ſervice: but yet this zeal is greatly to be condemned; becauſe it is a miſtaken and miſguided zeal, not at all directed as it ſhould be; " they have " a zeal of God; but not according to knowledge."

From which words I ſhall take into conſideration theſe three things.

I. What are the qualifications and properties of " a zeal according to knowledge."

II. By what marks and characters we may know " that zeal," which here, and elſewhere in ſcripture is condemned, as " not being according to know- " ledge."

III. How far the doing of any thing, out of " a " zeal for God," doth mitigate and extenuate the evil of it. For when the apoſtle here teſtifies concerning the Jews, that they had " a zeal of God;" he ſpeaks this in favour of them, and by way of mitigation of their Faults. When I have handled theſe three particulars, I ſhall apply my diſcourſe to the preſent occaſion of this day.

I. What are the qualifications and properties of " a zeal according to knowledge." I ſhall mention theſe three.

1. That our zeal be right, in reſpect of it's object.

2. That the meaſure and degree of it be proportioned to the good or evil of things, about which it is converſant.

3. That we purſue it by lawful ways and means.

1. That

1. That our zeal be right in reſpect of it's object; SERM. LXXXII.
I mean, that thoſe things which we are zealous for, be certainly and conſiderably good; and that thoſe things which we are zealous againſt, be certainly and conſiderably evil. A miſtake in any of theſe quite mars our zeal, and ſpoils the virtue of it: and though it be never ſo much intended for GOD, it is not at all pleaſing and acceptable to him; becauſe it is a blind and ignorant and miſtaken zeal: and the hotter, the worſe; it is not an heavenly fire, "that "comes down from above;" but it is like the fire of hell, heat without light. If we miſtake good and evil, and be zealouſly concerned, againſt that which is good, or for that which is evil; the greater our zeal is, the greater is our faults; and inſtead of doing GOD and religion ſervice and credit, we do the greateſt miſchief and diſhonour we can to them both: or if the thing about which our zeal is converſant, be of a doubtful and uncertain nature; this is not properly an object of zeal. Men ſhould never be earneſt for or againſt any thing, but upon clear and certain grounds, that what we contend ſo earneſtly for, is undoubtedly good; and that which we are ſo violent againſt, is undoubtedly evil: if it be not, we are zealous for we know not what, and that I am ſure, is a "zeal not according to knowledge."

And if the thing be certainly good or evil, which we are ſo concerned about; it muſt alſo be conſiderably ſo, otherwiſe it will not warrant our being zealous about it. All truth is good, and all error bad; but there are many truths ſo inconſiderable, and which have ſo ſmall an influence upon practice, that they do not deſerve our zeal and earneſt contention about them; and ſo likewiſe are there many errors, and miſtakes, of ſo ſlight and inconſiderable a nature, that

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that it were better men ſhould be let alone in them, than provoked to quarrel and contend about them.

Thus that great heat that was in the chriſtian church, about the time of obſerving Eaſter, was, in my opinion, "a zeal not according to knowledge." They were on both ſides agreed in the main, which was to celebrate the memory of our SAVIOUR's reſurrection: but there were different cuſtoms about the time, which was a matter of no ſuch conſideration, as to deſerve ſo much heat and zeal about it, eſpecially conſidering the uncharitable, and miſchievous conſequences of that difference.

2. That our zeal may be according to knowledge. The meaſure and degree of it muſt be proportioned to the good or evil of things, about which it is converſant. That is an ignorant zeal, which is converſant about leſſer things, and unconcerned for greater. Such was the zeal of the ſcribes and phariſees, who were mightily concerned about external and leſſer matters; but took little or no care of inward purity, and real and ſubſtantial goodneſs; they were very careful, "not to eat with unwaſhed hands, and to "make clean the outſide of the cup and platter;" but then "they were full of extortion, and all un-"righteouſneſs: they paid tythe of mint, and aniſe, "and cummin; but omitted the weightier things, "judgment, mercy, and fidelity;" or, as St. Luke expreſſeth it, "they paſt over judgment and the "love of GOD."

A zealous ſtrictneſs about external rites and matters of difference, where there is a viſible neglect of the ſubſtantial duties of religion, and the great virtues of a good life, is either a groſs ignorance of the true nature of religion, or a fulſom hypocriſy. And ſo likewiſe is a loud and zealous outcry againſt

rites

rites and ceremonies, and the impoſition of indiffe- SERM. LXXXII.
rent things in religion, when men can releaſe themſelves from the obligation of natural and moral duties, and paſs over mercy, and juſtice, and charity.

3. A zeal that is "according to knowledge," muſt be purſued and proſecuted by lawful and warrantable means. No zeal for GOD and his glory, for his true church and religion, will juſtify the doing of that which is morally and in itſelf evil. "Will "ye ſpeak wickedly for GOD, and talk deceitfully "for him?" We do not know what belongs to the honour of GOD and religion, if we think to promote his glory, by means ſo diſhonourable and offenſive to him. The apoſtle pronounceth it a damnable ſin, for any to charge this doctrine upon chriſtianity, that evil may be done for a good end, and to promote the glory of GOD, Rom. iii. 8. "As we be "ſlanderouſly reported, and as ſome affirm that we "ſay, let us do evil that good may come; whoſe "damnation is juſt."

And yet nothing is more frequent, than for men, out of a zeal for GOD and religion, to overlook the evil and unlawfulneſs of the means they uſe, for the advancing ſo good an end. This is that which hath ſanctified thoſe refined arts of lying and perjury, by equivocation, and mental reſervation; thoſe ſeditious ways of diſturbing the peace of kingdoms, by treaſon and rebellion, by the excommunicating, and depoſing of princes, upon pretence of hereſy; of extirpating thoſe, whom they pleaſe to call hereticks, by inquiſitions, and croiſado's, and maſſacres; and this, not only in the opinion of private perſons, but in the judgment of popes, and of general councils. I proceed in the

II. Place

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II. Place to ſhew by what marks and characters we may know the contrary zeal, that which is not according to knowledge, which is condemned here in the text, and very frequently in other places of ſcripture: and though this may be ſufficiently known by the contrary marks and properties (which I ſhall but briefly mention) yet to diſcover it more fully, I ſhall add one or two more very groſs and ſenſible ſigns and inſtances of it.

1. It is "a zeal without knowledge," that is miſtaken in the proper object of it, that calls good evil, and evil good; a zeal for groſs errors and ſuperſtitions plainly contrary either to the revelation of GOD's word, or the light of reaſon, or to common ſenſe; any or all of theſe cannot be "a zeal according to knowledge." A zeal for the worſhip of images, for praying to ſaints and angels, contrary to the plain law and word of GOD; a zeal for the ſacrilegious depriving of the people of half the ſacrament, contrary to our SAVIOUR's plain inſtitution, and the acknowledged practice of the catholick church, for a thouſand years; a zeal for that moſt abſurd of all doctrines that ever was taught in any religion, I mean the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, not only without any ſufficient authority from ſcripture (as is acknowledged by ſeveral of the moſt learned of the Roman church) but contrary to reaſon, and in defiance of the ſenſe of all mankind; a zeal for theſe, and many more like groſs errors and practices, cannot poſſibly be "a zeal according to knowledge"

2. That is "a zeal without knowledge," the degree whereof is manifeſtly diſproportioned to the good or evil of things about which it is converſant; when there is in men a greater and fiercer zeal for the

the externals of religion; than for the vital and eſſential parts of it: for the traditions of men; than for the commandments of GOD: for bodily ſeverities; than for the mortification of our luſts: for the means of religion; than for the end of it: a greater zeal againſt the omiſſion and neglect of ſome ſenſeleſs and ſuperſtitious practices; than againſt the practice of the groſſeſt immoralities: and againſt the deniers of the doctrines of tranſubſtantiation, and of the pope's infallibility, an equal, if not a greater zeal (I am ſure a more ſevere proſecution) than againſt thoſe who deny our SAVIOUR to be the Meſſias, and the Son of GOD: this certainly is not "a zeal according to "knowledge." Nor, SERM. LXXXII.

3. That which is proſecuted by unlawful and unwarrantable means. That cannot be "a zeal of GOD "according to knowledge," which warrants "the "doing of evil, that good may come;" the violating of truth and faith, and of the peace of human ſociety, for the cauſe of the catholick church; and breaking the eternal and immutable laws of GOD, for the advancing of his glory. Nor,

4. An uncharitable zeal, which is an enemy to peace and order, and thinks itſelf ſufficiently warranted to ſeparate from the communion of Chriſtians, and to break the peace of the church, upon every ſcruple, and upon every fancy and conceit of unlawful impoſitions, though in the moſt indifferent things; nay, upon this ſingle point, becauſe a thing which they acknowledge lawful, and indifferent in itſelf, is in the worſhip of GOD enjoined by authority; the moſt unreaſonable principle that I think ever was avowed among Chriſtians; not to do a thing, which otherwiſe they might do, only becauſe it is enjoined; and to fancy, that an indifferent thing becomes preſently

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ſently unlawful, becauſe it is commanded by lawful authority; and that it is a ſin to do any thing, in the worſhip of GOD. which is not left to their liberty, whether they will do it or not. This is not only a zeal without knowledge; but contrary to common ſenſe. Nor,

5. A furious and cruel zeal, which St. James calls a bitter, or a wrathful zeal, and which tends to confuſion and every evil work, which is blind with its own rage, and makes men, as St. Paul ſays of himſelf, when he perſecuted the Chriſtians, exceedingly mad againſt all that differ from them, and ſtand in the way of their fierce and outrageous zeal.

6. And laſtly, a zeal for ignorance, is moſt certainly not "a zeal according to knowledge;" and this is a zeal peculiar to the church of Rome, by ſuch ſtrict laws to forbid people the uſe of the holy ſcriptures in a known tongue; nay, not ſo much as to allow them to underſtand what they do in the ſervice of GOD; to require them to be preſent at their publick prayers, and to join with them in them, without letting them know the meaning of them; to pretend to teach them, by reading leſſons to them in an unknown tongue; and all this under pretence of increaſing their devotion; as if the leſs men underſtand of the ſervice of GOD, the more they would be affected with it, and edified by it.

And yet there is nothing in which the church of Rome hath been more zealouſly concerned, than to keep the people in ignorance: nothing they have oppoſed with more obſtinacy, againſt the repeated application of princes, and people, at the beginning of the reformation; than to allow the people the uſe of the ſcriptures, and their publick prayers, in a known tongue. And their obſtinacy in this

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point, was not without reaſon; nothing being more certain, than that if the people were once brought to underſtand the ſcriptures, they would ſoon quit their religion, which in ſo many things is ſo directly contrary to the word of GOD. The SERM. LXXXII.

III. And laſt thing remains to be ſpoken to, viz. how far the doing of things, out of "a zeal for GOD," doth mitigate and extenuate the evil of them. For when the apoſtle here teſtifies, concerning the Jews, that they had "a zeal of GOD," he ſpeaks this in favour of them, and by way of mitigation of their fault. "I bear them record;" I who was once acted by this ignorant and furious zeal, which now poſſeſſeth them, and perſecuted the Chriſtians in the ſame outragious manner, as they ſtill continue to do, and all this with a very good conſcience, as I thought, and out of "a zeal for GOD," and the true religion. So he tells us, Acts xxvi. 9. "I verily thought with "myſelf, that I ought to do many things contrary "to the name of JESUS of Nazareth." So that his "zeal was ſincere, and with a real intention to do ſervice to GOD and religion; and yet for all that was very faulty and ſinful, and, if he had perſiſted in it, damnable; ſo that his confidence, that he was in the right, and the ſincerity of his zeal in acting according to the perſuaſion of his conſcience, did not alter the nature of the actions he did out of this zeal, and make them leſs wicked in themſelves: though it was ſome mitigation of the fault of the perſon, and rendered him more capable of the mercy of GOD, by repentance, than if he had done contrary to his conſcience, and the clear convictions of his own mind.

And therefore the beſt way to underſtand the great evil and wickedneſs of this furious and blind zeal, will be, to conſider the account which St. Paul, after his

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his converſion, gives of his own doings, and what load he lays upon himſelf, notwithſtanding the ſincerity of his zeal, and that he acted according to his conſcience. Acts viii. and ix. you have the hiſtory at large of his outragious doings, how he made havock of the church, entering into every houſe, and haling men and women to priſon; how he breathed out threatnings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the LORD. Acts xxii. 4. "I perſe-"cuted, ſays he, this way unto the death, binding "and delivering into priſons both men and women." And chap. xxvi, 10, 11. "Many of the ſaints did I "ſhut up in priſon, and when they were put to death, "I gave my voice againſt them; and I puniſhed "them often in every ſynagogue, and compelled "them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad "againſt them, I perſecuted them even to ſtrange "cities." Gal. i. 13, 14. Ye have heard, ſays he, "of my converſation in times paſt, in the Jews reli-"gion; how that beyond meaſure I perſecuted the "church of GOD, and waſted it, being exceedingly "zealous of the traditions of my fathers." 1 Tim. i. 13. "Who was before a-blaſphemer, a perſecu-"tor, and injurious." So that he chargeth himſelf with the guilt of blaſphemy and murder, and a moſt furious and outragious perſecution of good men; for which elſewhere he pronounceth himſelf the chief of ſinners. From whence it evidently appears, that men may do the moſt wicked and damnable ſins, out of a zeal for GOD.

And this was the caſe of many of the Jews, as our SAVIOUR foretold, that "the time ſhould come, "when they ſhould kill them, thinking they did GOD "good ſervice." But yet for all this, the apoſtles of our LORD make no ſcruple, to charge them with down-

downright murder. Acts ii. 23. speaking of their putting our SAVIOUR to death, "whom ye by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And Acts vii. 52. "The just one, of whom ye have been now "the betrayers and murderers." SERM. LXXXII.

Yet notwithstanding their sin was of this high nature in itself; it was some mitigation of the fault of the persons, that they did these things out of an ignorant zeal, and render them more capable of the mercy of GOD, upon their repentance. And upon this account our SAVIOUR interceded with GOD for mercy for them; "Father forgive them, for they "know not what they do." St. Peter also pleads the same in mitigation of their fault, Acts iii. 17. "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance "ye did it, as did also your rulers." And St. Paul tells us, that he found mercy, upon his repentance, on this account, 1 Tim. i. 13. "But I obtained "mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbe-"lief." But still for all this, wicked things done out of conscience and zeal for GOD, are damnable, and will prove so, without repentance.

I shall now draw some inferences from this discourse, by way of application.

1. If it be so necessary, that our zeal be directed by knowledge; this shews us how dangerous a thing zeal is in the weak and ignorant sort of people. Zeal is an edge-tool, which children in understanding should not meddle withal; and yet it most frequently possesseth the weakest minds; and commonly by how much the less knowing people are, by so much the more zealous they are: and in the church of Rome, where knowledge is professedly discouraged, and suppressed in the common people, zeal is mightily countenanced and cherished. And they make great

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uſe of it; for this blind and furious zeal, is that which inſpires them to do ſuch cruel and barbarous things as were hardly ever acted among the heathen. Zeal is only fit for wiſe men; but it is chiefly in faſhion among fools.

Nay it is dangerous in the hands of wiſe men, and to be governed and kept in with a ſtrict rein; otherwiſe it will tranſport them to the doing of undue and irregular things. Moſes, one of the wiſeſt and beſt of men, and moſt likely to govern and manage his zeal as he ought, and to keep aloof from all exceſs and extravagance, being the meekeſt man upon earth, yet he was ſo ſurpriſed, upon a ſudden occaſion, that in a fit of zeal, he let fall the two tables of the law, which he had but juſt received from GOD, and daſhed them in pieces. A true emblem of an ungoverned zeal, in the tranſport whereof even good men are apt to forget the laws of GOD, and let them fall out of their hands, and to break all the obligations of natural and moral duties.

2. From hence we plainly ſee, that men may do the worſt and wickedeſt things out of a zeal for GOD and religion. Thus it was among the Jews, who engroſſed ſalvation to themſelves, and denied the poſſibility of it to all the world beſides; and the church of Rome have taken copy by them, as in an arrogant conceit of themſelves, ſo in the blindneſs, and fury, and uncharitableneſs of their zeal towards all, who refuſe to ſubmit to their authority and directions.

And as the teachers and rulers of the jewiſh church did of old, ſo doth the church of Rome now; they take away the key of knowledge from the people, and will neither enter into the kingdom of heaven themſelves, nor ſuffer thoſe that would, to enter in. They brand for heretics thoſe who make the holy ſcrip-

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tures the rule of their faith, and worſhip; as St. Paul tells us the Jews did in his time, Acts xxiv. 14, "After the way which they call hereſy, ſo worſhip I "the God of my fathers, believing all things which "are written in the law, and the prophets." They eſtabliſh the merit of their own righteouſneſs, not ſubmitting to the righteouſneſs of God, by the faith of Jesus Christ. So St. Paul tells us the Jews did, in the verſe immediately after the text; "for they "being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, have not "ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God." And as the Jews anathematized and excommunicated the firſt Chriſtians, and perſecuted them to the death, as our Saviour foretold, "that the time "would come, when they ſhould put them out "of their ſynagogues, yea and kill them, think-"ing they did God good ſervice;" ſo the church of Rome hath, for many ages, uſed the ſincere profeſſors of the ſame religion, perſecuting them, firſt with excommunication, and then with fire and faggot; and with all the violence and fury in the world endeavouring the utter extirpation and ruin of them, by bloody croiſado's and a barbarous inquiſition, by treacherous maſſacres, and all ſorts of helliſh plots and machinations; witneſs the monſtrous deſign of this day, never to be remembered or mentioned without horror, to have deſtroyed at one blow, and have ſwallowed up in one common ruin, our king, and prince, and nobles, and the repreſentative body of the whole nation; witneſs the bloody maſſacre of Ireland, and all their wicked deſigns and practices continued to this very day.

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3. And laſtly, that zeal for God and religion, does not alter the nature of actions done upon that

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account. Perſecution and murder of the ſincere profeſſors of religion, are damnable ſins; and no zeal for God and religion can excuſe them, or take away the guilt of them; zeal for God will juſtify no action that we do, unleſs there be diſcretion to juſtify our zeal.

There is nothing oftner miſleads men, than a miſguided zeal; it is an *ignis fatuus*, a falſe fire, which often leads men into bogs and precipices; it appears in the night, in dark and ignorant and weak minds, and offers itſelf a guide to thoſe who have loſt their way; it is one of the moſt ungovernable paſſions of human nature, and therefore requires great knowledge and judgment to manage it, and keep it within bounds. It is like fire, a good ſervant, but a bad maſter; if it once get head, it conſumes and dévours all before it, and the great danger and miſchief of it is, that it is moſt commonly found where it ſhould not be, and poſſeſſes thoſe moſt, who are leaſt fit to govern it; and moſt frequently employed about what it ſhould not be; and ten to one but it is either miſtaken in the object, or in the meaſure and degree of it; and even when it is a virtue, it is a nice and dangerous one; for the wiſeſt men are apt to mingle their own paſſions and intereſts with their zeal for God and religion. So that it is not enough that men are acted by a zeal for God, and do ſincerely follow the dictates of their conſciences; but they muſt be careful to inform their conſciences, and not ſuffer themſelves to be violently tranſported and hurried on by their own paſſions and prejudice, and by a blind and furious zeal without knowledge.

But what then? Would we have men not follow their own conſciencies, or act contrary to them? No,

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by no means: for though conſcience be not our rule; yet it is our immediate guide; and he does ill, who does act againſt his conſcience. But men muſt be careful how they ſettle their practical judgment of things, and conclude things to be lawful or unlawful, duties or ſins, without reaſon and good ground. SERM. LXXXII.

God hath given us underſtandings, to try and examine things, and the light of his word to direct us in this trial; and if we will judge raſhly, and ſuffer ourſelves to be hurried by prejudice or paſſion, the errors of our judgment become faults of our lives: for God expects from us that we ſhould weigh and conſider what we do; and when he hath afforded us light enough to diſcern between good and evil, that we ſhould carefully follow the direction of it; that we ſhould be ſuſpicious of our ſelves, when our zeal carries us to do things that are furious and cruel, falſe and treacherous, and have a horrid appearance even to the light of nature; we ſhould queſtion that zeal which is ſo contrary to chriſtian goodneſs and meekneſs, to peace and charity, and which tends to "confuſion and every evil "work."

I will conclude all with that excellent paſſage of St. James, which will ſhew us how little regard is to be had to many mens pretences of zeal for religion, Jam. iii. 13. "Who is a wiſe man, and en-"dued with knowledge amongſt you? Let him "ſhew out of a good converſation his works with "meekneſs of wiſdom. But if ye have bitter zeal "and ſtrife in your hearts; glory not, and lie not "againſt the truth. This wiſdom deſcendeth not "from above; but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh. For "where zeal and ſtrife is; there is confuſion, "and every evil work. But the wiſdom which is

" from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle,
" and eaſy to be entreated; full of mercy and good
" fruits; without partiality, and without hypocriſy:
" and the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in peace of
" them that make peace."

Preached on November 5. 1686.

SERMON LXXXIII.

The beſt men liable to the worſt treatment, from miſtaken zealots.

JOHN XVI. 2.

They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth GOD *ſervice.*

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THESE words were ſpoken by our bleſſed SAVIOUR, when he was about to leave the world; at the thoughts whereof, finding his diſciples to be exceedingly troubled, he comforts them by the conſideration of the great benefit and advantage which from thence would accrue to them; he tells them that he was going to heaven to intercede for them, and to make way for their admiſſion there; and withal promiſeth, that his Father would ſend the Holy Ghoſt, who ſhould abundantly ſupply the want of his preſence with them: but he tells them at the ſame time, that they ſhould meet with very ill entertainment and uſage from the world: but ſo had he, chap xv. 18. "If the world hate you, ye know

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" that it hated me, before it hated you;" and why ſhould they expect to be better treated than he was? ver. 20. "Remember the word that I ſaid unto you, " the ſervant is not greater than the LORD; if they " have perſecuted me, they will alſo perſecute you."

And at the beginning of this chapter he tells them, that he did on purpoſe forewarn them of theſe things, to prepare their minds beforehand, and to arm them againſt the worſt that might happen, ver. 1. "Theſe " things have I ſpoken unto you, that ye ſhould not " be offended." And then he declares more particularly, how far the rage and malice of men ſhould proceed againſt them, and in what kind they ſhould ſuffer: " they ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues; " yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you " will think that he doth GOD ſervice."

So that our SAVIOUR here foretels two ſorts of perſecution, which his diſciples ſhould be exerciſed withal excommunication; " they ſhall put you out " of their ſynagogues:" and exciſion; " yea the " time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you will " think that he doth GOD ſervice." And theſe perhaps were but ſeveral kinds and degrees of excommunication; for the clearer underſtanding whereof it will be requiſite, briefly to explain the three degrees of excommunication among the Jews.

The firſt called Niddui, is that which our SAVIOUR here means, by " putting out of the ſyna- " gogue;" and which he elſewhere expreſſeth by ἀφόρισμος, or ſeparation. Luke vi. 22. " Bleſſed " are ye when men ſhall hate you, and when they " ſhall ſeparate you from their Company." And the effect of this excommunication was to exclude men from the communion of the church and people of GOD, and from his ſervice, which was a great

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diſgrace; becauſe after this ſentence, none of the Jews were to converſe with them, but to look upon them as heathens and publicans.

The ſecond degree of this cenſure was called Cherem; which included the firſt, but extended farther, to the confiſcation of goods into the ſacred treaſury, and devoting them to GOD; after which there was no redemption of them. And of this we find expreſs mention, Ezra x. 7, 8. where it is ſaid, "that "they made proclamation throughout Judah, and "Jeruſalem, unto all the children of the captivity, "that they ſhould gather themſelves together unto "Jeruſalem; and that whoſoever would not come "within three days, according to the counſels of "the princes and elders, all his ſubſtance ſhould be "dovoted, and himſelf ſeparated from the congre-"gation of thoſe that had been carried away."

The third degree was Shammatha when the rebellious and contumacious perſon was anathematized and devoted, and, as ſome conceive, according to the law (Lev. xxvii. 29.) was to be put to death; though other very knowing men in the Jewiſh learning think it amounted to no more than a final ſentence, whereby they were left to the judgment of GOD, by ſome remarkable judgment of his to be cut off from the congregation of Iſrael.

Of the firſt and laſt of theſe degrees of excommunication, our SAVIOUR ſeems here to ſpeak; but whether in both inſtances in the text, he alludes in the one to the loweſt, and in the other to the higheſt degree of excommunication among the Jews, is not ſo certain. To the firſt he plainly does, when he ſays, "they ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues: and then he adds, that they ſhould proceed much higher againſt them, even to put them to death;

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" the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you will " think that he doth GOD ſervice;" that is, they ſhould not only think it lawful to kill them, but look upon it as a duty, as a high act of religion, as an acceptable piece of worſhip, and " a ſacrifice well-" pleaſing to GOD." For ſo indeed the word does not only import, but moſt properly ſignify, " who-" ſoever killeth you ſhall think, λατρείαν προσφέρειν " τῷ Θεῷ, that he offers a ſacrifice to GOD;" for ſo the word λατρεία is ſometimes uſed for " a ſacrifice;" but being joined with προσφέρειν ſeems neceſſarily to be determined to that ſenſe.

From the words thus explained, I ſhall make theſe following obſervations, very proper for our conſideration upon the occaſion of this day.

1. That the beſt of men may be ſeparated and excluded from the communion of thoſe who may aſſume to themſelves to be the true and the only true church: yea and ſuffer under the notion of very bad and criminal perſons. This our SAVIOUR here foretold of his apoſtles, ſome of the beſt men that ever lived; " they ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues."

2. That they who are thus excommunicated, by the pretended true church, may nevertheleſs be real members of the true church of CHRIST. Though the apoſtles were thus dealt withal by the jewiſh church: they did not ceaſe for all that to be members of the true church of GOD.

3. That from uncharitable cenſures men do eaſily and almoſt naturally proceed to cruel actions. After they had put the diſciples of our LORD " out of " their ſynagogues," and thereby concluded them to be hereticks and reprobates, they preſently proceed to kill them, as not worthy to live. " They ſhall put you out of their ſynagogues;" and when they

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they have done that, they will ſoon after think it a thing not only fit, but pious and meritorious, to put you to death; "the time will come, that they will "think it a good ſervice to GOD to kill you."

4. That men may do the vileſt things, and the moſt wicked, not only under a grave pretence of religion, but out of a real opinion and perſuaſion that they do religiouſly. Murder is certainly one of the greateſt and moſt crying ſins; and yet our SAVIOUR foretels, that the Jews ſhould put his diſciples to death, being verily perſuaded that in ſo doing they offered a moſt acceptable ſacrifice to GOD: "Yea the time ſhall come, that whoſoever killeth "you ſhall think that he offers a ſacrifice to GOD."

5. That ſuch actions are nevertheleſs horribly impious and wicked, notwithſtanding the good mind with which, and the good end for which they are done. The Jews were not excuſed from the guilt of perſecution and murder, for all they thought they did well in killing the diſciples of our LORD.

6. I obſerve that the corruption of the beſt things is the worſt. Religion is the higheſt accompliſhment and perfection of human nature; and zeal for GOD and his truth an excellent quality, and highly acceptable to GOD: and yet nothing is more barbarous, and ſpurs men on to more horrible impieties, than a blind zeal for GOD, and falſe and miſtaken principles in the matter of religion; as is plain from the inſtances here before us in the text. I ſhall ſpeak as briefly as I can to theſe obſervations.

1. That the beſt of men may be ſeparated and excluded from the communion of thoſe, who may aſſume to be the true and only true church, and that, under the notion of very bad and criminal perſons. This our SAVIOUR foretels in the text ſhould be

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the fate of his apoſtles, ſome of the beſt and holieſt perſons that ever lived; "they ſhall put you out of "the ſynagogues." SERM. LXXXIII.

And what the Jews did in the beginning of chriſtianity, to the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, hath been too frequently practiſed ſince, by ſome of the profeſſors of chriſtianity towards one another; and very good men have in ſeveral ages fallen under the cenſure of excommunication, and have been ſeparated from the external communion of the church, and branded with the odious names of hereticks and apoſtates, by thoſe who have arrogated to themſelves to be the only orthodox and true church, and have gotten the external power and management of religion into their hands; witneſs the caſe of Athanaſius and others, in the reign and prevalency of Arianiſm; and the ill treatment, that not only particular perſons, eminent for their learning and piety, but whole churches have met with in this kind, from that haughty and uncharitable church, which makes nothing of thundring out this moſt fearful ſentence of excommunication, againſt perſons, and churches much better and more chriſtian than herſelf, and againſt all that will not ſubmit to her pretended infallibility, and uſurped authority over the ſouls and conſciences of men.

But it is our great comfort, that the apoſtles and diſciples of our LORD and maſter were thus uſed, by a church that made the ſame pretences that they do, and upon grounds every whit as plauſible, as I could clearly ſhew, if I were minded to purſue and make out this compariſon.

2. They who are thus excommunicated, by the pretended only true church, may nevertheleſs be true members of the church of CHRIST. Though

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the apoſtles were thus dealt withal by the jewiſh church, they did not ceaſe for all this to be real members of the true church of GOD. For it is not calling hereticks firſt, that proves them that do ſo to be no hereticks, or acquits them from the ſame or greater crimes, than thoſe which they are ſo forward to charge upon other men; nor will GOD condemn all thoſe who are excommunicated by men, and deny ſalvation, to every one whom they ſhall pleaſe to ſeparate from their ſociety, and to call by ſome odious name. Men may be put out of the ſynagogue, and yet received into heaven: for the judgment of GOD is not according to the uncharitable cenſures of men; but according to truth and right.

The ſentence of excommunication is certainly very dreadful where it is duly inflicted; and next to the judgment of GOD, men ought to be afraid of juſtly incurring the danger of this cenſure; and it ought to be upon very plain and evident grounds that men either ſeparate themſelves, or endanger their being cut off from the communion of the church they live in: but when it once comes to this, that a church is infected with groſs errors and corruptions, plainly contrary to the word of God, eſpecially if that church will impoſe her errors upon all that are of her communion; then thoſe who refuſe to comply, do not ſeparate themſelves, but are cut off; do not depart, but are driven out of the communion of that church; and ſeparation in that caſe is as innocent and free from the guilt of ſchiſm, as the cauſe of it is; for the terms of communion are become ſuch, that thoſe who are convinced of thoſe errors and corruptions can have no ſalvation, if they continue in that communion, and then I am

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ſure their ſalvation will not be endangered by leav- SERM.
ing it, or being excommunicated out of it; for that LXXXIII.
would be the hardeſt caſe in the world, that men ſhould be damned for continuing in the communion of ſuch a church, and damned likewiſe for being caſt out of it.

Therefore no man ought to be terrified, becauſe of the boldneſs and preſumption of thoſe, who with ſo much confidence, and ſo little charity, damn all that are not of their communion; for we ſee plainly from the text, that men may be in the right and ſureſt way to ſalvation, and yet be excommunicated by thoſe who call themſelves the true church, and will not allow ſalvation to any, but thoſe of their own communion. The diſciples of our LORD and SAVIOUR were certainly very good men, and in a ſafe way of ſalvation, though they were excommunicated, and put out of the ſynagogue, by the chief prieſts and rulers of the jewiſh church. I proceed to the

3d Obſervation, which was this, that from uncharitable cenſures, men do by an eaſy ſtep and almoſt naturally proceed to cruel actions. After the Jews had put the diſciples of our LORD out of their ſynagogues, and thereby concluded them to be hereticks and reprobates; no wonder they ſhould proceed to kill thoſe, whom they thought not worthy to live; "they ſhall put you out of their ſyna- "gogues," (ſays our SAVIOUR) and when they have done that, they will ſoon think it a thing not only fit and reaſonable, but pious and meritorious, and a good piece of ſervice done to GOD, to put you to death. Uncharitableneſs naturally draws on cruelty, and hardens human nature towards thoſe, of whom

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whom we have once received ſo ill an opinion, that they are enemies to GOD and his truth.

And this hath been the ſource of the moſt barbarous cruelties that have been in the world; witneſs the ſeverity of the heathen perſecution of the Chriſtians, which juſtified itſelf by the uncharitable opinion which they had conceived of them, that they were deſpiſers of religion and the gods, and conſequently atheiſts; that they were pertinacious and obſtinate in their opinions, that is, in the modern ſtile, they were hereticks. And the like uncharitable conceit among Chriſtians hath been thought a ſufficient ground (even in the judgment of the infallible chair) for the juſtification of ſeveral bloody maſſacres, and the cruel proceedings of the inquiſition againſt perſons ſuſpected of hereſy; for after men are once ſentenced to eternal damnation, it ſeems a ſmall thing, to torment and deſtroy their bodies.

4. Men may do the vileſt and moſt wicked things, not only under a grave pretence of religion, but out of a real opinion and perſuaſion of mind, that they do religiouſly. Murder is certainly one of the greateſt and moſt crying ſins; and yet our SAVIOUR foretels, that the Jews ſhould put his diſciples to death, being verily perſuaded that in ſo doing they ſhould offer a moſt acceptable ſacrifice to GOD; "yea the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you "ſhall think that he offers a ſacrifice to GOD."

Not but that the great duties and virtues of religion are very plain and eaſy to be underſtood; and ſo are the contrary ſins and vices: but then they are only plain to a teachable, and honeſt, and well-diſpoſed mind; to thoſe "who receive the word "with meekneſs," and are not blinded with wrath and

and furious zeal: to thoſe that "receive the truth "into an honeſt heart," and "entertain it in the "love of it;" they are plain to the humble and meek; "for the humble GOD will guide in judg- "ment, and the meek will he teach his ways;" ſuch as theſe GOD ſeldom ſuffers to fall into fatal miſtakes about their ſin, or duty, ſo as "to call "good evil, and evil good; to call light darkneſs, "and darkneſs light; to think uncharitableneſs a virtue, and downright murder a great duty. SERM. LXXXIII.

But if men will give up themſelves to be ſwayed by ſelf-love and ſelf-conceit, to be governed by any baſe or corrupt intereſt, to be blinded by prejudice, and intoxicated by pride, to be tranſported and hurried away by violent and furious paſſions; no wonder if they miſtake the nature, and confound the differences of things, in the plaineſt and moſt palpable caſes; no wonder if "GOD give up" perſons of ſuch corrupt minds "to ſtrong deluſions, to be- "lieve lies." It ought not to be ſtrange to us, if ſuch men bring their underſtandings to their wills and intereſts, and bend their judgments to their prejudices, make them to ſtoop to their pride, and blindly to follow their paſſions, which way ſoever they lead them; for GOD uſually leaves ſuch perſons to themſelves, as run away from him, and is not concerned to ſecure thoſe from ſplitting upon the moſt dangerous rocks, who will ſteer their courſe by no compaſs, but commit themſelves to the wind and tide of their own luſts and paſſions.

In theſe caſes men may take the wrong way; and yet believe themſelves to be in the right: they may oppoſe the truth, and perſecute the profeſſors of it, and be guilty of the blackeſt crimes, and the moſt horrid impieties, malice and hatred, blaſphemy and murder;

SERM. LXXXIII. murder; and yet all the while be verily perſuaded, that they are ſerving GOD, and ſacrificing to him.

Of this we have a plain and full inſtance in the ſcribes and phariſees, the chief prieſts and rulers among the Jews, who becauſe "they fought the "honour of men, and not that which was from GOD, and loved the praiſe of men, more than the "praiſe of GOD" becauſe they were prejudiced againſt the meanneſs of our SAVIOUR's birth and condition, and had upon falſe grounds (though as they thought upon the infallibility of tradition, and of ſcripture interpreted by tradition) entertained quite other notions of the Meſſias, from what he really was to be; becauſe they were proud and thought themſelves too wiſe to learn of him; and becauſe his doctrine of humility, and ſelf-denial, did thwart their intereſt, and bring down their authority and credit among the people; therefore they ſet themſelves againſt him with all their might, oppoſing his doctrine, and blaſting his reputation, and perſecuting him to the death; and all this while did bear up themſelves with a conceit of the antiquity and privileges of their church, and their profound knowledge in the law of GOD, and a great external ſhew of piety and devotion, and an arrogant pretence and uſurpation of being the only church and people of GOD in the world: and by virtue of theſe advantages, they thought they might do any thing; and that whoſoever oppoſed the authority of ſo ancient and good a church, muſt needs be very bad men, and deſerve to be proceeded againſt in the ſevereſt manner. As if any pretence of piety could give a privilege to do wickedly, and by how much the wiſer and holier any man took himſelf to be, he might do ſo much the worſe things.

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There is another remarkable inſtance of this in St. Paul, who out of a blind and furious zeal, for "the traditions of his fathers," perſecuted the true church of GOD, by impriſonment and death, and all manner of cruelties; and all this while "he verily "thought" that he was in the right, and "that he "ought to do" all theſe "things againſt the name "of JESUS of Nazareth." And if GOD had not in a miraculous manner checked him in his courſe, and changed his mind, he would have ſpent his whole life in that courſe of perſecution and cruelty, and would (with pope Paul the IVth. upon his death-bed) have recommended the inquiſition (or if he could have thought of any thing more ſevere) to the chief prieſts and rulers of the jewiſh church. SERM. LXXXIII.

I will not trouble you with nearer inſtances; though the jewiſh church is not the only church in the world, that hath countenanced the deſtruction and extirpation of thoſe who differ from them, as a piece of very acceptable ſervice to GOD, and meritorious of the pardon of their ſins.

5. I obſerve that ſuch actions as theſe are nevertheleſs horribly wicked and impious, notwithſtanding the good mind with which, and the good end for which they are done. The Jews were not excuſed from the guilt of perſecution and murder, for all they thought they did well in killing the diſciples of our LORD.

For to make an action good and acceptable to GOD, the goodneſs of all cauſes, and of all circumſtances, muſt concur; and any one defect in any of theſe does vitiate the whole action, and ſpoil the goodneſs of it. We muſt do it with a good mind, being verily perſuaded that what we do is good and acceptable to GOD; in which ſenſe St. Paul ſaith,

SER. XXIII. that "whatever is not of faith is ſin;" and we muſt do it for a good end, for the honour of GOD, and the ſervice of religion, and the benefit and edification of men. But there is one thing wanting yet, which is often forgotten, but is mainly conſiderable, viz. what we do with a good mind, and to a good end, muſt be good and lawful in itſelf, commanded or allowed, or at leaſt not forbidden by GOD: if it be; what good circumſtances ſoever may belong to the action, the whole action is ſtark nought; becauſe the very matter and ſubſtance of it is evil, and unlawful, and damnable, though done for never ſo good an end. So St. Paul tells us, that they "who ſay they might do evil, that good "might come, their damnation was juſt." He tells us indeed, that ſome would have charged this doctrine upon the Chriſtians, and particularly upon himſelf; but he rejects it, with the greateſt deteſtation; and (which is not unworthy our obſervation) in his epiſtle to the Roman church; as if the Spirit of GOD, to whom all times are preſent, had particularly directed him to give this caution to that church, that in future ages they might be warned againſt ſo pernicious a principle, and all wicked practices that are conſequent upon it.

And we find that St. Paul, after his converſion, did think it no ſufficient plea and excuſe for himſelf, and his perſecution of the chriſtian profeſſion, that what he did was out of zeal for GOD and his true religion, as he was verily perſuaded; but notwithſtanding that, acknowledgeth himſelf a murderer, and "one of the greateſt ſinners;" for which, without "the great mercy of GOD," he had periſhed everlaſtingly.

6. And laſtly, I obſerve that the corruption of the beſt things is the worſt. Religion is certainly the higheſt accompliſhment and perfection of human nature; and zeal for GOD and his truth an excellent quality, and highly acceptable to GOD: and yet nothing is more barbarous, and ſpurs men on to more horrid impieties, than a blind zeal for GOD, and falſe and miſtaken principles in the matter of religion. SERM LXXXIII.

Our SAVIOUR compares the chriſtian religion, and the miniſters and profeſſors of it, to ſalt and light, the moſt uſeful and delightful things in the world. Religion enlightens the minds of men, and directs them in the way wherein they ſhould go; it ſeaſons the ſpirits and manners of men, and preſerves them from being putrified and corrupted: but if "the ſalt loſe its "ſavour," if that which ſhould ſeaſon other things, be tainted itſelf; "it is thenceforth" the moſt inſipid and offenſive thing in the world, "good for nothing, "but to be caſt upon the dunghil: if the light that "is in us be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?"

Miſtakes and falſe principles are no where ſo pernicious, and of ſuch miſchievous conſequence, as in religion. A blind and miſguided zeal in religion is enough to ſpoil the beſt nature and diſpoſition in the world. St. Paul (for ought appears) was of himſelf of a very kind and compaſſionate nature; and yet what a fury did his miſtaken zeal make him! It is hardly credible how madly he laid about him, but that he himſelf gives us the account of it, Acts xxvi. 9, 10, 11. "I verily thought with myſelf, (ſays he) that I "ought to do many things, contrary to the name "of JESUS of Nazareth; which thing I alſo did in "Jeruſalem, and many of the ſaints I ſhut up in "priſon, having received authority from the chief "prieſts. And when they were put to death, I gave

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" my voice againſt them; and I puniſhed them oft " in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſ- " pheme, and being exceedingly mad againſt them, " I perſecuted them even to ſtrange cities."

I might deſcend lower, and give inſtances both of former and latter times, of emperors and princes, both heathen and chriſtian, that of themſelves were mild and gentle; and yet through a miſtaken zeal, and the inſtigation of the chief prieſts, have been carried to cruel and bloody things. And indeed nothing gives ſo keen an edge, even to the mildeſt tempers, as an erroneous and wild zeal for GOD and religion; it is like quickſilver in the back of a ſword, that is not very ſharp of itſelf, which gives a mighty force and weight to its blow, and makes it cut terribly.

And it is very ſad to conſider, that the zealous proſecution of miſtakes in religion hath produced ſadder and more barbarous effects in the world, and more frequently, than the ordinary corruptions and degeneracy of natural light is apt to do; as the decay of the richeſt and moſt generous wines makes the ſoureſt vinegar; ſo that the paſquil or libel againſt pope Urban the VIIIth. upon occaſion of his taking off the brazen roof of the old capitol (which had held out ſo many ages, and that notwithſtanding Rome had been ſo often ſacked by barbarous nations) and his ſelling it to enrich his family [*quod non fecerant Barbari, fecerunt Barberini*] may, with changing the name and occaſion, be applied to a great many others; that they have been guilty of thoſe cruelties againſt Chriſtians, upon account of difference in religion, which the moſt barbarous nations never exerciſed upon one another.

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I have done with the obſervation and the text; and ſhall I now need to make my application of what hath been ſaid, to the occaſion of this day; The thing applies itſelf; ſince the horrid deſign of this day was undertaken and carried on upon the ſame pretences and principles, upon which the Jews perſecuted the diſciples of our LORD, and much in the ſame method; for the firſt thundered out an excommunication againſt them, and then took it for granted, that it would be "an acceptable ſacrifice "to GOD, to deſtroy them. SERM. LXXXIII.

I will not go about to aggravate the conſpiracy of this day, it is paſt my ſkill; nor will I extend the blame and guilt of it any farther than the plain evidence and reaſon of the thing does enforce. It is a thing ſo ſcandalous to human nature, and ſo great a reflection upon any church and religion, to be acceſſary to the contriving or countenancing of any ſuch deſign, that I am very well contented, that it ſhould be confined to as narrow a compaſs as may be, and none eſteemed guilty of it, but thoſe that were openly in it, or have ſince endeavoured to excuſe it. All that we deſire of others, is, that they would declare their hearty deteſtation of ſuch abominable practices, and be as good as their word; and that they would not account it a ſervice and ſacrifice to GOD, to deſtroy all that cannot be of their mind.

So that the inference from all this diſcourſe, in ſhort, ſhall be this, that men ſhould take great care to inform their conſciences aright, and to govern them by the plain rules of good and evil, the law of GOD written upon our hearts, and revealed in his word, which forbids ſuch practices as I have been ſpeaking of, as clearly as the ſun ſhines at noon-day; and that we would always be afraid to do a

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bad thing, though gilded over with never ſo glorious colours, and ſpecious pretences of zeal for God and his truth. For a man may do a thing with an honeſt mind, and for a religious end, and be commiſſioned and countenanced (as St. Paul was) by them who take themſelves to be the only true church in the world; and yet at laſt prove to have been all the while a blaſphemer, and a murderer, and the greateſt of ſinners; for none of theſe pretences are ſufficient to warrant and ſanctify a wicked action: before this can be done, the immutable nature of good and evil muſt be changed.

I will conclude all with that gentle reproof of our bleſſed SAVIOUR to his diſciples, when their zeal for him had tranſported them to make that cruel requeſt to him, that he would (as Elias had done upon a like occaſion) "call for fire from heaven to "deſtroy the Samaritans: Ye know not what man-"ner of ſpirit ye are of; for the Son of man came "not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them;" hereby declaring to us the true temper and ſpirit of chriſtianity, and that they that act contrary to it are ignorant of the nature of the chriſtian religion; "ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for "the Son of man came not to deſtroy mens lives, "but to ſave them."

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SERMON LXXXIV.

The duty and reaſon of praying for governors.

Preached on the 29th of May 1693.

1 TIM. II. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, that firſt of all, ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty.

I Need not tell any here, that this day is appointed by authority for an anniverſary ſolemnity, in a grateful commemoration of the great mercy of GOD to theſe nations, in putting an end to the inteſtine wars and confuſions of many years, in reſtoring to us our own ancient government and laws, and in bringing home, as upon this day, the rightful heir of theſe kingdoms, to the crown and throne of his fathers: And though the glory of this day hath been not a little ſullied and obſcured by many things which have happened ſince that time, fitter now to be buried in ſilence and oblivion, than to be mention'd and raked up; yet it hath pleaſed GOD, in ſcattering thoſe black clouds, which not long ſince hung over us, to reſtore this day to its firſt luſtre and brightneſs; ſo that we may now with great joy look back upon it, as deſigned by the wiſe providence of GOD, to make way for the happineſs which we now enjoy under their preſent majeſties, by whom,

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under God, we have been delivered from that terrible and imminent danger which threatned our religion and laws, and the very conſtitution itſelf of our ancient government. And to this occaſion, no kind of argument can be more proper and ſuitable, than that which the text affords to our conſideration, in this injunction of St. Paul to Timothy, to take care that in the publick worſhip of God, ſupplications and thankſgivings be put up to God, "for kings, and all that are in authority. I exhort "therefore," &c.

In which words there are four things conſiderable.

Firſt, The duty here enjoined, which is prayer; expreſſed to us in ſeveral words, which ſeem to denote the ſeveral kinds or parts of prayer; "I exhort "therefore, that ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, "and giving of thanks be made for all men: For "kings, and for all that are in authority, &c." Some of theſe words are of a very near ſignification; and yet there ſeems ſome difference betwixt them, moſt probably this:

1. By Δεήσεις, which we render ſupplications, is probably meant that part or kind of prayer, wherein we ſupplicate God for the pardon of our ſins, and for the averting and removing of evils, whether temporal or ſpiritual, from ourſelves or others.

2. By προσευχὰς, which we render prayers, ſeems to be meant petitions for bleſſings and good things from God; and theſe are moſt properly call'd prayers.

3. By Ἐντεύξεις, ſeems to be particularly meant pleadings and interceſſions on the behalf of others.

4. By Εὐχαριστίας, is certainly intended praiſes and thankſgivings to God, for his bleſſings and goodneſs to ourſelves and others. This ſeems to be

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the difference between them, which whether it be exactly ſo or not, is not very material, ſince theſe are unqueſtionably the ſeveral kinds or parts of prayer. SERM. LXXXIV.

All theſe ſeveral ſorts of prayer, St. Chryſoſtom, in his comment upon this text, tells us were publickly uſed in his time, in the daily ſervice of the church; "this (ſays he) all communicants do know is done "every day, morning and evening; how that we "pray for all the world, for kings, and all that "are in authority.

Secondly, For whom we are to pray; in general, "for all men." Our prayers are one of the greateſt and beſt expreſſions of our charity, and therefore ought to be as large and extenſive as our charity is. We are bound in common charity to love all men, and to wiſh well to them; but our bare wiſhes ſignify nothing, unleſs we direct them to GOD, who is able to confer upon them the bleſſings and good things which we wiſh to them.

And this is a charity which GOD hath put into every man's power, and which the pooreſt man in the world, as well as the richeſt, is capable of exerciſing at all times and upon all occaſions: For the "ear of GOD is open to the prayers" of the poor as well as of the rich, and they are every whit as prevalent with him; nay, the ſcripture ſeems to ſay, that GOD hath a more particular regard to the prayers of the poor. So that we may be liberal and bountiful in our prayers to thoſe, to whom we are able to give nothing elſe; and when our hands cannot reach to relieve them, we may pour out our hearts to GOD for them; we may pray for their ſpiritual and temporal good, and we may praiſe GOD for the good which befals them, though it was out

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Thirdly, for whom we are more eſpecially, and in the firſt place, to pray; viz. for thoſe who have the greateſt and moſt publick influence of all others, upon the peace and happineſs of mankind, "for "kings, and for all that are in authority;" that is, for the ſupreme magiſtrate, and for all inferior magiſtrates, who derive their power and authority from the ſupreme.

Government is neceſſary to the welfare of mankind; becauſe it is the great band of human ſociety, the guard of its peace, and the ſecurity of every man's perſon and property; and therefore we are concerned as much as is poſſible, both to pray for our governors, and to bleſs GOD for them; becauſe without them we ſhould be in a moſt wretched condition. Mankind would be unavoidably miſerable without government; human ſociety would preſently diſband, and all things would run into confuſion. It is a remarkable ſaying of one of the jewiſh maſters, pray for the happineſs of the kingdom or government; for if it were not for the fear of that, men would devour one another alive. And Joſephus tells us, that when the Jews were made ſubject to the Romans (though it was by conqueſt) twice a day they offered up ſacrifices for the life and ſafety of the emperor. And this was very agreeable to what GOD had commanded that people by his prophet, in a much like caſe, when the Jews were conquered by the king of Babylon, and carried away captives, Jer. xxix. 7. "Seek the peace "of the city whither I have cauſed you to be car-"ried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for "it; for in the peace thereof ſhall ye have peace."

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And ſurely the reaſon is much ſtronger, why we ſhould pray for our natural princes and governors. I come now to the

Fourth and laſt thing conſidered in the text, and which I principally deſign to ſpeak to, namely, the reaſon or argument which the apoſtle uſes to engage us "to pray for our princes, and for all that are "in authority, that we may live a quiet and peace-"ble life, in all godlineſs and honeſty." The manifold benefits and advantages which redound to us from our governors, is a ſufficient argument why we ſhould pray to GOD for them, and praiſe him likewiſe for ſo great a bleſſing, and that in the firſt place; "I exhort therefore, firſt of all" (ſaith the apoſtle), &c. Now the apoſtle here in the text expreſſeth two great advantages of government, which upon the matter do comprehend all the reſt.

1. That by government we are ſecured in our civil rights and intereſts, in the quiet and peaceable poſſeſſion of what is our own.

2. That we may thereby be protected in the free practice and exerciſe of religion and virtue.

Theſe are the two greateſt and moſt deſirable things to man; and neither of theſe can be had without government. I ſhall briefly conſider theſe two particulars, and then endeavour to ſhew, what obligation the conſideration of them lays upon us, both to pray to GOD in the behalf of our princes and governors, and likewiſe to praiſe GOD for them: And then I ſhall conclude all with a brief application of this whole diſcourſe to the ſolemn occaſion of this day.

Firſt, I ſhall begin with the benefits and advantages of government mention'd in the text, namely, theſe two.

1. That

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1. That by it we are ſecured in our civil rights and intereſts, in the quiet and peaceable poſſeſſion of what is our own.

Without government there could be no ſuch thing as property in any thing beyond our own perſons; for nothing but laws can make property, and laws are the effect of government and authority: Nay, without government, we have no ſecurity of our perſons and lives, much leſs of any thing that belongs to us, and is at preſent in our poſſeſſion. Were we not protected by laws (which are the effect of government) we could have no ſafety, no quiet enjoyment of any thing; but every man muſt be perpetually upon his guard againſt all the world, and expoſed to continual violence and injuries from thoſe, who are too many, and too ſtrong for him; ſo that all our quiet and ſecurity from fear and danger, from the fraud and oppreſſion of thoſe who are more crafty and powerful than our ſelves, from endleſs confuſions and diſtractions, and from a ſtate of perpetual feud and war with all mankind, is entirely due and owing to civil government.

And this alone is ſo unſpeakable a benefit, that without it, men, of all creatures, would be the moſt miſerable; becauſe all that wit and ſagacity, all that cunning and contrivance, which mankind hath above the brute creatures would but enable them to do ſo much the more miſchief to one another, and to deviſe and find out more powerful and effectual means and inſtruments to harm and deſtroy one another.

In ſhort, that we live, and that we live well, in any tolerable condition either of ſafety or plenty, and that we are able to call any thing our own for one day, or for one hour; that we are not in perpetual terror and apprehenſion of mortal dangers, and that

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we are at any time free from the invaſion of what we at preſent poſſeſs, by the fraud and force of others, is ſolely the effect of this great bleſſing, and divine appointment of government, to preſerve the peace of human ſociety, and by wiſe and wholſome laws, to tie up mens hands from mutual injuries and violence. Upon this all the comfort and all the ſecurity of human laws does depend. From hence it comes to paſs, (that as the ſcripture expreſſeth it) "We may ſit "down every man under his own vine, and under "his own fig-tree, and that there ſhall be none to "make us afraid." So that if ſecurity is neceſſary to the comfort and happineſs of mankind; then government is ſo too: For without this, the ſocieties of men would preſently diſſolve and fall in pieces, and all things would run into confuſion and diſorder. SERM. LXXXIV.

2. Another great benefit which may reaſonably be expected from government (though it does not always ſo happen) is, that men are protected by it, in the free exerciſe and practice of religion and virtue. Therefore we ſhould "pray for kings, and for all "that are in authority, (ſays the apoſtle) that we "may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs "and honeſty;" that is, in the practice of piety and devotion towards GOD; of ſobriety and temperance in regard to our ſelves: and of juſtice and charity toward all men.

It is true indeed, (and ſo the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians found it by experience) that the edge and authority of laws may be, and ſometimes is turned upon the true religion, and the ſincere profeſſors of it: But even then, though good men may receive great harms and injuries from perſecuting princes and governors; (as the primitive Chriſtians did from ſeveral of the Roman emperors) yet then it ſo happens,

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pens, that good men have ſome conſiderable benefit and protection from the civil government and laws, being for the moſt part preſerved from the fury and rage of the multitude; ſo that though particular perſons undergo the trial of cruel ſufferings, yet much greater numbers do eſcape and are preſerved.

And which is very conſiderable in this matter, againſt ſeveral of the main and eſſential parts of religion, there never were any human laws made; as againſt inward love, honour, and reverence of Almighty God, and the worſhipping him in our hearts, and in ſecret; of this part of religion, human laws can make no cognizance: Nay, farther yet, againſt humility and meekneſs, againſt modeſty, and patience, againſt temperance and chaſtity, againſt peaceableneſs and obedience to government, againſt juſtice and gratitude, againſt charity and forgiveneſs of injuries, againſt theſe and ſuch like virtues, the apoſtle has told us, there is no law. Againſt the practice of theſe (without ſome of which government could not poſſibly ſubſiſt) no perſecution was ever raiſed, no not by the worſt of governors: on the contrary, in the practice of theſe virtues, good men have been in all ages and times protected by law.

'Tis true indeed, that good men have many times been grievouſly perſecuted by the civil government and authority, for the external profeſſion of revealed religion; which was the caſe of the chriſtians at that time, when the apoſtle commanded them "to pray "for kings, and for all that were in authority;" that under their protection, "they might lead quiet and "peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty." St. Paul knew very well, when he gave this injunction to them, "that ſupplications and prayers be made "for kings, and for all that are in authority," that the

the powers of the world did not at that time favour christianity: But he knew likewise, that government was necessary to the happiness of mankind, and that Christians, even in that state of persecution, did enjoy many considerable benefits and advantages by it, so that they were not perpetually exposed to popular rage and cruelty, and the violence of wicked and unreasonable men; which would not only have hindered the progress of christianity, but would in a short time have endangered the extinguishing of it: Besides, that by the favour and protection of government, the Christians had many considerable intervals of peace and ease, which gave christianity a breathing time, and opportunity to recover itself; and though the secular authority did for a long time discountenance christianity, and keep it under hatches; that was but an accidental effect and abuse of government, and obedience was still due, and prayers for it, so much the more necessary, yea and thanksgivings to God for it very reasonable, upon account of the common benefits and advantages of it to human society. SERM. LXXXIV.

Besides that Christians did hope and believe, that the civil government might in time be gained, to give its countenance and assistance to christianity, and that "kings and princes might become nursing fa-"thers to the church," as was expressly foretold by the prophets, and afterwards in God's due time was remarkably accomplished. In the mean time Christians were patiently to obey and suffer in expectation of those glorious rewards in another world, which were promised to their faith and patience; and to pray for the powers that persecuted them, that "they also "might be brought to the acknowledgemnt of the "truth," and might use that power which God had committed to them, for the protection of truth and

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Second place, to ſhew what obligation the conſideration of the mighty benefits and advantages of government lays upon us, both to pray to GOD on the behalf of princes and governors, and likewiſe to praiſe GOD for them.

Becauſe in their welfare and proſperity the publick peace and happineſs doth chiefly conſiſt, and in the publick good conſiſts the good of particular perſons; and above all, the piety and goodneſs of princes and magiſtrates (eſpecially thoſe who are in the higheſt place of authority) have a general good influence upon the manners of men, both for the diſcountenancing of wickedneſs and vice, and for the encouragement of religion and virtue, which are the main pillars and foundation of publick peace and proſperity. "A "king ſitting in the throne of judgment, (ſaith Solomon, Prov. 20. 8.) "ſcattereth away all evil with his "eyes." The pattern of a religious and good prince is a living law to his ſubjects, and more than the example of ten thouſand others, to mould and faſhion the manners of the people to a conformity to it.

Beſides that there is (as one expreſſeth it) a kind of moral connexion and communication of evil and of guilt betwixt princes and people, ſo that they are many times mutually rewarded for the virtues and good actions, and puniſhed for the ſins and faults of one another. Of which proceedings of the divine juſtice towards the people of Iſrael, there are many remarkable inſtances in ſcripture, where GOD rewarded the piety of good princes, with great bleſſings upon their people, and puniſhed the perſonal faults of their

their kings with publick judgments upon the whole nation. So that in truth it is the greateſt kindneſs and charity to our ſelves, to pray for our princes and governors; becauſe our welfare is involved in theirs, and we ſuffer not only in all the misfortunes and calamities which befal them, but many times upon account of their perſonal faults and miſcarriages. *Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*, the extravagances of princes are puniſhed in the misfortunes of their ſubjects. Thus David (otherwiſe a very good king) ſinned in numbering the people, and the plague fell upon them; he was puniſhed in the calamity of his people. And this was in no wiſe unjuſt, becauſe there are always ſins enough in any nation to deſerve puniſhment, and God may take what occaſion he pleaſes, to ſend his judgments upon them that deſerve them; for princes and people make but one civil and political body and what part of it ſoever is puniſhed, the other ſuffers. And this is the true ground and reaſon of the communication of puniſhments betwixt princes and people. SERM LXXXIV.

Another conſideration which ſhould engage us "to pray for thoſe that are in authority," is, that we reap the great benefit of their care, and pains, and vigilancy for us, "under their ſhadow we are ſafe." Our innocency and our rights are protected by their power and laws, and by the juſt puniſhments which they inflict upon evil-doers, and upon thoſe who go about to violate our rights in any kind; ſo that we ought to pray and to praiſe God for them, as our great benefactors, and the chief inſtruments of our ſecurity and welfare; and therefore not only in duty but in juſtice and gratitude, we are bound to wiſh all good to them, and to intercede with God for them,

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for the peace and proſperity of their government and to bleſs GOD on their behalf: yea, we ought to do this out of love to our ſelves; becauſe their good and proſperity is ours, their goodneſs and righteouſneſs, their perſonal piety and virtues extend to us, and have a mighty influence upon us, to excite and encourage us to follow their good example, and "to go and do likewiſe."

And we ought likewiſe to do this out of charity and compaſſion to our princes and governors, whoſe condition is in truth rather to be pitied than envied, and whoſe high place and dignity is much more to be dreaded than deſired by a wiſe man, conſidering how heavy a burden they ſuſtain, what dangers they are continually expoſed to, what cares and troubles and cenſures they daily undergo, for our ſafety and eaſe. So that whatever ambitious and inconſiderate men may think, wiſe men do certainly know and find by experience, that to diſcharge with care and faithfulneſs all the parts of a good governor is a very difficult and troubleſom province. Inferior magiſtrates find care and trouble enough, in that ſmall ſhare and part of it which they ſuſtain; and if ſo, then certainly the care and concernment of the whole, muſt needs be a heavy burden indeed; and what abilities are ſufficient for it, what ſhoulders are ſtrong enough to ſtand under it?

And as upon this account they have the greateſt need of our prayers, for GOD's direction and aſſiſtance in the diſcharge of their high office, ſo likewiſe for his powerful grace to preſerve them from ſin and evil, in the midſt of thoſe manifold temptations to which they are continually expoſed, in appearance much beyond other men, from the height of their condition, and the extent of their power, which are

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ſtrong temptations to weak minds, to pride and in- SERM. LXXXIV
ſolency, to injuſtice and oppreſſion; from the abundance of all things, which miniſter to luxury and exceſs; and from the officious ſervility of paraſites and flatterers, who ſooth them in their faults, and humour them in their paſſions, and comply with their corrupt and vicious inclinations, and are always ready at hand, and forward inſtruments to execute their commands, and to ſerve their luſts and vices.

And as princes greatly need our prayers upon theſe accounts; ſo it is juſt matter of praiſe and thankfulneſs to GOD, when a nation hath wiſe, juſt, and good princes, who lay to heart the intereſts of their people and endeavour by all the wiſe methods and honeſt arts of government, effectually to procure it; who by their authority and due execution of the law, do diſcountenance, and, as much as in them lies, reſtrain wickedneſs and vice; and by their own example encourage virtue and piety in their ſubjects; and thereby invite, and even provoke them to the like practices: the life of a good prince is a kind of publick cenſure of ill manners, and reproof of wicked practices. And I do not know whether there be a more delightful ſight on this ſide heaven, than to ſee thoſe who are in eminent place and power, even if they might do whatever they would, yet continually chuſing to do what they ought; as if their power were ſo far from being a temptation to them to do evil, that on the contrary, the conſideration of it is one of the beſt and ſtrongeſt arguments to reſtrain them from it.

Weak minds are apt to meaſure their liberty by their power, and to think that the higher and greater they are, ſo much the greater privilege they have to be more extravagantly bad than others: but if the

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matter be really conſidered, the argument runs the other way; and he that reaſons wiſely, will certainly conclude with Tully, *in maximâ quæque fortunâ minimum licere*, that they who are in the higheſt ſtation, and greateſt power, have of all others the leaſt liberty to do what they liſt. Their power, ſuppoſing it never ſo uncontroulable and unaccountable, would be ſo far from being in reaſon a temptation to them to do what they ought not, that in truth it would ſet them above the temptation of doing any ill thing; becauſe they would ſtand in awe of no body, and there would be nothing that could hinder them from doing what is beſt, if they had a mind to it: and every one ought to have ſuch a mind: and nothing can be more miſ-becoming, and more directly contrary to the nature of their office, and the power wherewith they are intruſted, than to give an example of breaking thoſe laws, which they are to ſee put in execution.

God himſelf, becauſe he hath all power, is therefore all goodneſs, and is therefore "holy in all his "ways, and righteous in all his works;" according to the reaſoning of the author of the book of wiſdom, who argues thus with God, it is not (ſays he) agreeable with thy power to condemn him that hath not deſerved to be puniſhed; that is, it is not agreeable with infinite power, to do any thing that is unjuſt; for thy power (ſaith he to God), is the beginning of righteouſneſs, and becauſe thou art the Lord of all, it maketh thee to be gracious unto all. Infinite power is the foundation and principle of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, and an all-powerful being is good and righteous, not only from choice, but from a neceſſity of nature.

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And this is the true ground and reaſon of that ſaying of St. James, that "GOD cannot be tempted "with evil," becauſe his infinite power ſets him above all temptation to it: for what reaſon can be imagined, why he that hath all power, ſhall have any inclination to be otherwiſe than good? What can tempt him thereto? Since he that hath all power can neither have any hopes of being greater than he is, nor any fear of becoming leſs: and all temptation is founded either in hope or fear, and where neither of theſe can have any place, there can be no occaſion, no poſſible motive or temptation to evil, for to be evil, and to do evil, is always an effect of weakneſs and want of power. SERM. LXXXIV

The ſum of what I have ſaid upon this argument, and the deſign indeed of it, is to ſhew, that the greater power and authority any one hath, the leſs liberty he hath to do any thing that is bad. And I have been the larger upon this, becauſe I would fain imprint upon the minds of perſons, whom the providence of GOD hath inveſted with great power and authority, that as they have great opportunities of doing more good than others, ſo they have greater reaſon, and more advantages of doing it, and are more inexcuſable if they do any thing that is bad; not only becauſe their actions are of a more publick influence and obſervation; but becauſe their temptations to evil, how great ſoever they may ſeem to be, are in truth and reality much leſs than other mens. Happy are thoſe princes, that wiſely conſider this, and make their power and authority over others, an argument to be ſo much better themſelves, and to do ſo much more good to others; and becauſe they are leſs ſubject to the coercive power of law, do for that reaſon think themſelves ſo much the more

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obliged to be a law to themſelves. Bleſſed be God for the happineſs which we enjoy in this reſpect; and let us earneſtly beſeech him that he would be pleaſed to beſtow ſuch a plentiful meaſure of his grace and holy Spirit on our moſt gracious king and queen, as may effectually both engage and enable them to uſe their power to the beſt purpoſes for the publick good.

And thus I have briefly gone over, and explained to you the ſeveral particulars in the text; the duty of prayer here enjoined; for whom we are to pray, in general "for all men;" and for whom more eſpecially, and in the firſt place;" for kings, and all "that are in authority;" and upon what conſiderations we are to pray for them, and to praiſe God in their behalf; becauſe of the great benefits we receive by them; and becauſe both in reſpect of the dangers and difficulties of their condition, they ſtand in need of our prayers above other men; beſides that in praying for their welfare and proſperity, we pray for our own peace and happineſs.

And now to apply this to ourſelves, and to the occaſion of this day. By all that hath been ſaid, we cannot but be convinced what cauſe we have to bleſs God for that happy government which we live under, that excellent conſtitution, under the gentle influences whereof we enjoy more liberty, more plenty, and more ſecurity from all manner of injury and oppreſſion, than any nation this day on the face of the earth. Therefore with what thankfulneſs ſhould we this day commemorate the happy reſtoration of this government to us, after the miſerable diſtractions and confuſions of twenty years, by the reſtoration and return of our baniſhed ſovereign, in ſo peaceable, and yet ſo wonderful a manner, that a remem-

brance of it, even at this diſtance, is almoſt ſtill matter of amazement to us! SER. LXXXI.

"Bleſſed be the LORD GOD of Iſrael, who alone "doth wondrous things."

And with our joyful praiſes, let us join our moſt devout and fervent prayers to Almighty GOD, for the king's and queen's majeſties, "and for all that are in authority." And I may truly ſay, that there was hardly ever greater reaſon and occaſion for it, from both our diſtractions at home, and our dangers from abroad; never was there greater need of our earneſt ſupplications and prayers, than at this time, when our armies and fleets are in motion, and when GOD ſeems already to have given us ſome earneſt of good ſucceſs; bleſſed be his great and glorious name.

We have indeed a great army, and a more powerful fleet, than ever this nation ſent forth; but unleſs GOD be on our ſide, and favour our cauſe, in vain are all our preparations; for whenever his providence is pleaſed to interpoſe, by ſtrength ſhall no man prevail. Have we not reaſon then to cry mightily unto GOD, when the only ſtrength of the nation is at ſtake, when our ſins and provocations are ſo many and great, and there lies ſo heavy a load of guilt upon us? When the perſon of his ſacred majeſty is expoſed to ſo much hazard, not only in the high places of the field, but from the reſtleſs attempts of the malicious and implacable enemies of our peace and religion, that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to go forth with our armies and fleets, and not remember our iniquities againſt us, but ſave us for his mercies ſake?

We are too apt to murmur and complain of miſcarriages, and the ill management of affairs; but

SERM. LXXXIV.

ſurely the beſt thing we can do, and that which beſt becomes us, is to look forward, and to turn our cenſures of our governors and their actions, into humble ſupplications to GOD in their behalf, and in behalf of the whole nation; "that he would be "pleaſed to turn us every one from the evil of our "ways, that he may return to us, and have mercy "on us, that ſo iniquity may not be our ruin; that "he may rejoice over us to do us good, and may "at laſt think thoughts of peace towards us, "thoughts of good and not of evil, to give us an "expected end of our troubles."

Let us then betake ourſelves to the proper work of this day, hearty prayers and thankſgivings to Almighty GOD, for the king and queen, "and for "all that are in authority;" that as he hath been pleaſed by a wonderful providence, to reſcue us from the imminent danger we were in, and from all our fears, by the happy advancement of their majeſties to the throne of theſe kingdoms; ſo he would of his infinite goodneſs ſtill preſerve and continue to us this light of our eyes, and breath of our noſtrils, princes of that great clemency and goodneſs, which render them the true repreſentatives of GOD upon earth, and the moſt gracious governors of men.

And let us earneſtly beſeech him, "that he "would confirm and ſtrengthen them in all good-"neſs, and make them wiſe as angels of GOD, to "diſcern betwixt good and evil, that they may "know how to go in and out before this great "people; that he would give them the united af-"fections of their people, and a heart to ſtudy and "ſeek their good all the days of their lives.

And

And finally, that he would be pleaſed to continue ſo great a bleſſing to us, and to grant them a long and proſperous reign over us; and that their poſterity in this royal family may endure for ever, and their throne as the days of heaven; that under them the people of theſe nations, we and the generations to come, may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godlineſs and honeſty; for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST, who is king of kings, and Lord of lords; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all honour, and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.

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